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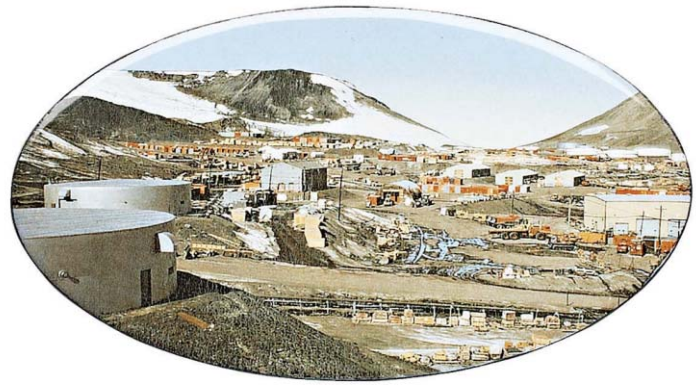

KIRSTEN HAYDON
Ice Industry (brooch), 2009
enamel, photo transfer, silver, copper, steel, reflector beads
2 ¾ x 5 ⅛ x ⅜"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON
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UBALDO VITALI
Triple Wave Pitcher, 1999
silver, ebony
8 ¼ x 11 ⅛ x 4 ½"
PHOTO: DON FREEMAN
(See Feature page 24)

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FOREWORD

THE PRACTICE OF alchemy aspires to transform mundane matter into precious substance. To realize this and other speculative aims, alchemical tradition has harnessed the forces of mysticism, philosophy, science, and magic. While such transubstantiation is closely aligned with metallurgy, the craft achieves its ends through the virtuosic handling of both base and noble elements.

As a transformative process, all art partakes of alchemic power, however unintentionally. This issue of *Metalsmith* contains more than one reference to the alchemist's trade, foremost in the "Look" department, with works selected by Marianne Hunter. Showcasing pieces from the Enamelist Society's 13th Biennial, titled *Alchemy*, Hunter's choices reveal how "glass and metal can be transformed into magical objects."

Cover artist Ubaldo Vitali also draws on alchemical history and terminology to convey the inexplicable nature of the creative act. Among the related metaphors he enlists to express the process of working in silver are distillation and sublimation. Both involve conversion from one state to another and entail, for Vitali, *un certo non-so-che* (a certain I know not what). As the artist asserts, "In sublimation you go from the first stage to the last in a way that we cannot explain."

Although author Bruce Metcalf does not employ the language of alchemy to describe Robert Longyear's work, his feature makes a potent case for this artist's transformative powers. "What I find particularly interesting about Longyear's jewelry," writes Metcalf, "is how he turns junk into compelling compositions." Driven by a commitment to his hometown of St. Louis, Longyear finds latent beauty in the city's industrial debris, which is reborn in art that infuses new life and hope into an ailing metropolis.

There are other streaks of magic and mystery throughout this issue—from Niki Ulehla's dream-inspired "Irrational Jewelry" (in Reviews) to the mind-bending *wunderkammer* explored in the Arhem Dossier. Ultimately the enchanting, if not mystical, creations discussed here make good on Hamlet's musing: "There are more things in heaven and earth,…than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

SUZANNE RAMLJAK
EDITOR

The mission of *Metalsmith* magazine is to document, analyze, and promote excellence in jewelry and metalsmithing. In fulfillment of the goal of producing a significant document of the field, editorial content will emphasize contemporary activities and ideas, with supportive content to include relevant historical work and critical issues.

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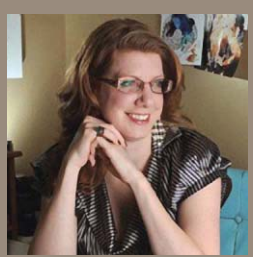

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What It Really Takes to be a Successful Artist Now

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Fine Jeweler

Success in Contemporary Craft Shows

Adam Kenney

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Efficiency and Earnings: Technical Choices that Build a Viable Studio

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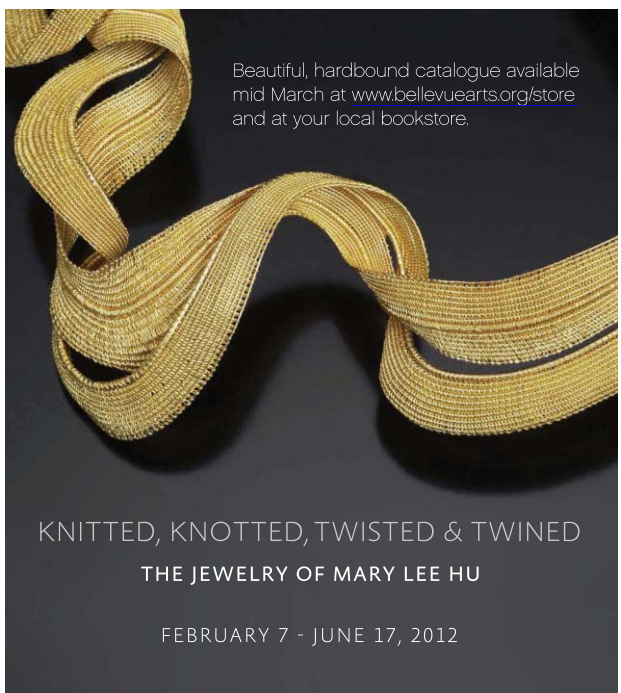

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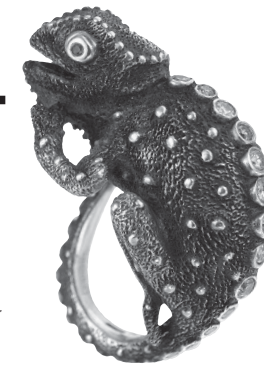

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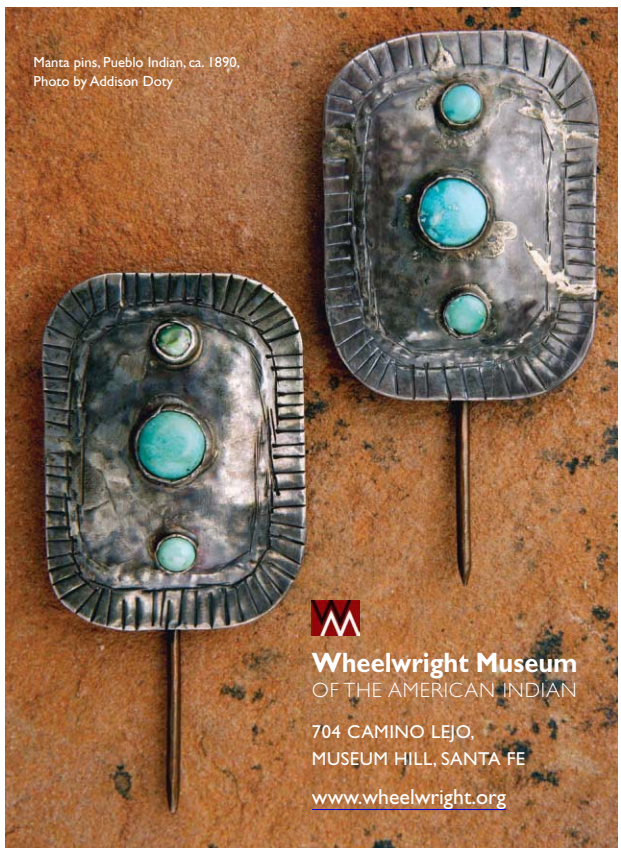
Manta pins, Pueblo Indian, ca. 1890,
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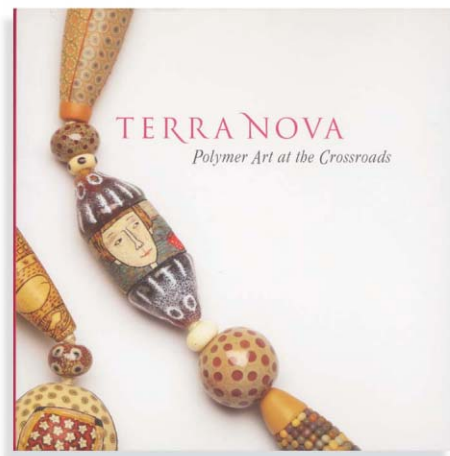
Terra Nova: Polymer Art at the Crossroads

RACHEL CARREN, BRUCE W. PEPICH, AND LENA VIGNA. PUBLISHED BY THE RACINE ART MUSEUM, 2011

BY DONALD FRIEDLICH



TERRA NOVA: Polymer Art at the Crossroads, the Racine Art Museum's (RAM) first venture into self-publishing, is a beautifully produced and elegantly designed hard-cover book that serves both as a catalog for RAM's exhibition of the same name and as an autonomous survey of polymer art as a medium. Three well-written and insightful essays effectively illuminate the field in general and also contextualize the objects in the portfolio portion of the book.

The first essay, "Forging a Unique Path: The History of Polymer Art," by art historian Rachel Carren, traces the early development of polymer clay in the late 1930s by a German plastics manufacturer. Carren goes on to document the two most prominent brands of polymer: FIMO and Sculpy, both introduced in the late 1960s. The material was used only sporadically in Europe and the United States until the 1980s, when it surged in popularity due to its very modest equipment demands, broad technical accessibility, and vibrant color palette. As the use of polymer grew, so did the quality and inventiveness of the artworks made of it.

Polymer's remarkable growth in the United States was greatly facilitated by the generous sharing of information and the proliferation of an extensive network of guilds and workshops. As a result, the field of polymer enthusiasts grew into a close-knit community.

Carren's essay concludes with an in-depth assessment of the historical impact of some of the prominent polymer artists including Pier Voulkos, Elise Winters, the team of Steven Ford and David Forlano, Cynthia Toops, Kathleen Dustin, Tory Hughes, and others.

The second text takes the form of an interview between Elise Winters and RAM's Executive Director and Curator of Collections Bruce W. Pepich. Winters has been central to many of the seminal exhibitions and events that have combined to advance polymer art, and she was of paramount importance to both the *Terra Nova* book and exhibition. This inspiring and enlightening interview should be required reading for anyone who wishes to advocate for a particular art medium. It is a brilliant case study of someone who has been an artist, teacher, collector, curator, fundraiser, and visionary. Passionate and tenacious, Winters founded the Polymer Collection Project (PCP) with the initial objective of buying, as she puts it, "one really stunning example from each of the artists whose work I loved." Later she was joined by Nan Roche, then Lindly Haunani and Carol Watkins, who together assembled, catalogued and documented a staggering collection of 2,000 objects.

Winters next set out to educate museum curators about the medium and its history, and then to place the work in the permanent collections of those curators' institutions. The largest group of 180 pieces was given to RAM, formed the basis for the *Terra Nova* exhibition, and established RAM as the major center for polymer art. The Mingei International Museum in San Diego received 52 works, and another 41 went to the Newark Museum. The Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York also acquired pieces.

The third essay, "A Visit to New Territory: A Conversation about the Polymer Landscape," is a dialogue between Bruce Pepich and Lena Vigna, the RAM curator of *Terra Nova*. As Vigna says, "We see this book and its related exhibition as a chance to set the stage for what comes next for polymer as an artistic medium. Instead of a traditional essay, we decided to have a curatorial conversation about polymer and where the field is at aesthetically and philosophically today. In the sidebar commentary, we have invited curators from the museums that have received pieces from the Polymer Collection Project (PCP) to also share their thoughts."

The conversation between Pepich and Vigna delivers as outlined above and the addition of perspectives from the curators Rob Sidner, Ulysses Dietz, Ursula Ilse-Neuman, Yvonne J. Markowitz, and Elisabeth Agro greatly enriches the already excellent discourse.

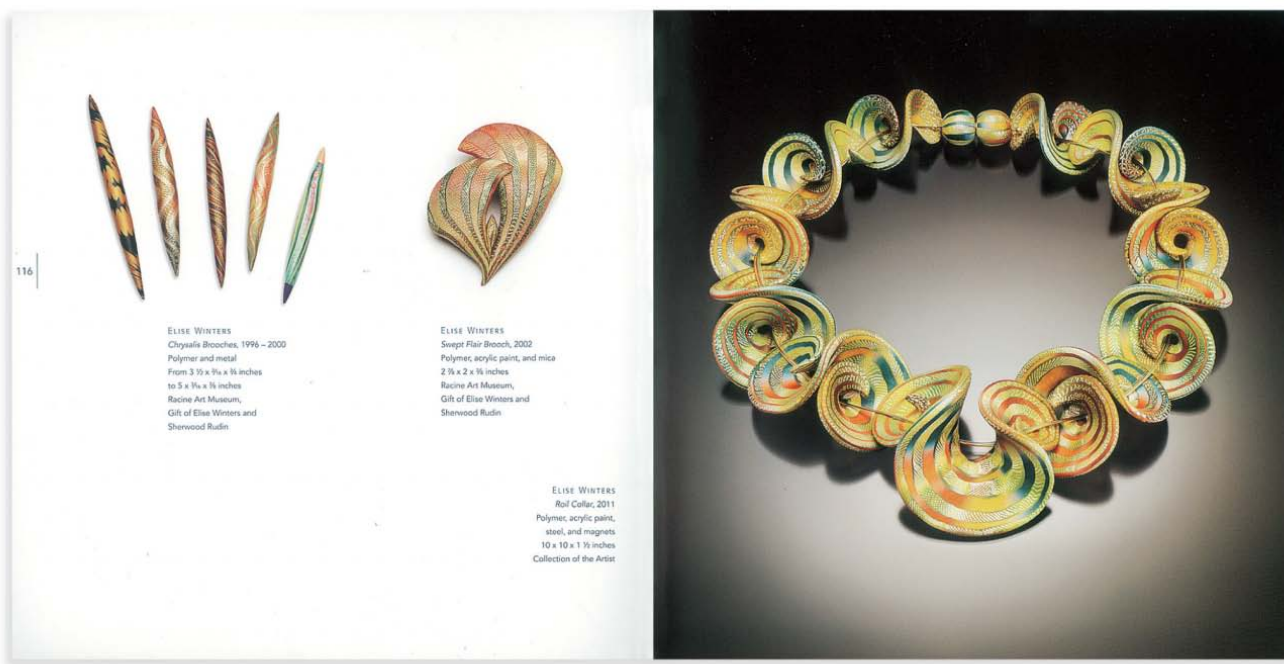
The first section of the portfolio portion of the book, Boundary Breakers, provides a comprehensive look at six distinguished polymer artists—Jeffrey Lloyd Dever, Kathleen Dustin, Tory Hughes, Cynthia Toops, Pier Voulkos, and Elise Winters—as well as the collaborative teams of Steven Ford and David Forlano, and furniture makers Bonnie Bishoff and J. M. Syron. Each artist, or team, is afforded a beautifully designed ten-page color sub-section that includes brief commentary from the artists as well as resume details. The book's second section, Polymer Collection Project: A Selected Portfolio, follows a more familiar format, showing one image each of twenty additional makers.

In craft publications, it is unusual to see the dual approach taken in *Terra Nova*, which so clearly emphasizes some artists over others. Polymer is thought of as an especially democratic medium and the editors' highly selective choices may have hurt some feelings and opened them up to charges of elitism. So be it. The reality is that all artwork isn't created equal. Some is more important and influential. While some artists work with a particular medium only occasionally, others make a lifetime commitment to the material and consistently produce excellent results. In the case of *Terra Nova*, I think the editors' approach was unerringly appropriate. They have produced a book that is not only beautiful and useful, but one that will lend credibility to and advance the field as a whole in the years to come.

As this book deftly illustrates, serious artists have over time explored polymer, pushed its boundaries, and finally created exciting new work.

Like many new mediums, polymer has received more than its share of derision, as has its culturally related cousin, precious metal clay. Admittedly, the great majority of the makers using these materials are hobbyists, but no one can deny that these crafters have hugely expanded the number of people using their hands to make jewelry. It's a cultural phenomenon that is, as Martha Stewart likes to say, "a good thing." As this book deftly illustrates, serious artists have over time explored polymer, pushed its boundaries, and finally created exciting new work. Perhaps someday we will learn as a field to be open and patient with new mediums, and be secure in the knowledge that in time great work will result.

Donald Friedlich is a studio jeweler and former SNAG President living in Madison, Wisconsin.



Gustav Reyes
A Bent for Wood

BY ANDREA DINOTO

A BRACELET SPIRALS around the wrist like a bit of ribbon; a necklace tumbles in airy, interlocking hoops; a slim wedding band emits an intriguing gleam. Gustav Reyes achieves these dramatic and subtle effects with the most stalwart of materials: wood. Reyes employs a proprietary process that melds traditional woodworking techniques with the steam bending and laminating technology associated with bentwood furniture manufacture. A cabinet maker by trade, Reyes turned exclusively to jewelry in 2005, the day his wife Juanita—who has metal allergies—asked if he could make her a ring of wood. Reyes understood that if he drilled a hole in a piece of wood it would collapse, but if the wood were thin enough and he could roll it he'd get a solid structure. In half an hour he'd made a ring that would become the prototype for his unique line of laminate and carved jewelry in woods from common to exotic to found.

Artist Gustav Reyes, 2010

Reyes uses salvaged woods from a variety of sources: craftsmen friends, industrial offcuts, even sentimental items such as recycled musical instruments or a child's old baseball bat. For his popular "Organic Coil" spiral bracelets, he uses FSC wood from controlled forestation, "so there is an ethical approach to its harvesting," he explains. Reyes exhibits regularly at ACC and other shows and through select galleries. Although he makes every piece himself (prices range from $120 for bracelets and earrings to about $3,000 for one-of-a-kind pieces), he employs three studio assistants and two people to help with media, bookkeeping, website design and customer relations. While he invests in some paid advertising, his most valuable contacts come, he says, through direct interaction with customers, curators, and gallery people whom he meets largely through shows.

Born of a Puerto Rican father who fought as a Marine in the Korean War, and a Mexican mother who immigrated to the States as a teenager, Reyes was raised in Chicago, where he lives with his wife and two sons and maintains a studio/workshop. His father, a carpenter, who died when Reyes was 11, made precious-metal jewelry as a hobby. "I often accompanied him to workshops he attended to learn the craft of jewelry making," Reyes recalls, which awakened in him "a desire to create." Reyes attended art school at the Art Institute of Chicago, and also the Chicago Bauhaus Academy where he says he developed a strong understanding of and appreciation for architecture and the finer aspects of woodworking. After turning to jewelry,

Rings, 2009
oak; bog wood with
birch liner

Organic Coil (bracelet), 2010
cherry wood
3 x 3 x 3"

Gustav Reyes' booth at the ACC Baltimore show, February 2012

After turning to jewelry, Reyes began to view trees, the source of his material, as "gems of nature."

Reyes began to view trees, the source of his material, as "gems of nature… part of our evolution, something we accept and that society puts in its place." Reyes's modernist sensibility, coupled with his skill with laminate technology (view the process at: http://vimeo.com/32805862) enables him to create lightweight but incredibly strong forms—circles, hoops and arcs— destined to become rings, necklaces, brooches, pendants, and in a new twist, lamps. One of his recent bold, sculptural rings features a base of bog oak supporting a sculpted top of red wood and ebony (reclaimed from a bass violin) set with freshwater pearl. For durability, all of Reyes's pieces are finished with a light coating of beeswax, which, he says, affords a softly glowing patina plus "good protection"; although, he cautions, wood jewelry should never be immersed in water.

Reyes distinguishes between his limited-edition GR Art Jewelry line, that sells best to more mature collectors, and his phenomenally successful production line of wedding bands called Simply Wood Rings, which has tapped a niche market among young people "comfortable with spending money on the Internet." (He estimates that he has produced more than 4,000 wedding rings.) In fact, says Reyes, the Internet accounts for 80 percent of his sales, especially among ecologically minded customers looking for jewelry made from sustainably obtained materials, "people very conscious of not using metal bands or diamonds." A Reyes wedding band often features an inlay of semiprecious stones—turquoise, amethyst, mother of pearl from crushed buttons—to provide color and textural contrast to his earth-toned, satin-finished woods. Reyes's philosophy about wood and the ephemeral nature of life itself might be summed up in the name he's given to his bestselling wedding band design: Love is Now. Set with a faceted moissanite, a synthetic diamond, the ring can be made in a variety of woods. "The material will go back into the earth eventually," Reyes explains, "so if you don't cherish it now, you won't have it forever." But trees have feelings, too. As Reyes's tag line reads for Simply Wood Rings, "Let the tree hug you!"

Andrea DiNoto is a New-York based writer on arts and design.

Furthermore:
www.gustavreyes.com
www.simplywoodrings.com

Unleashed in Arnhem

BY URSULA ILSE NEUMAN

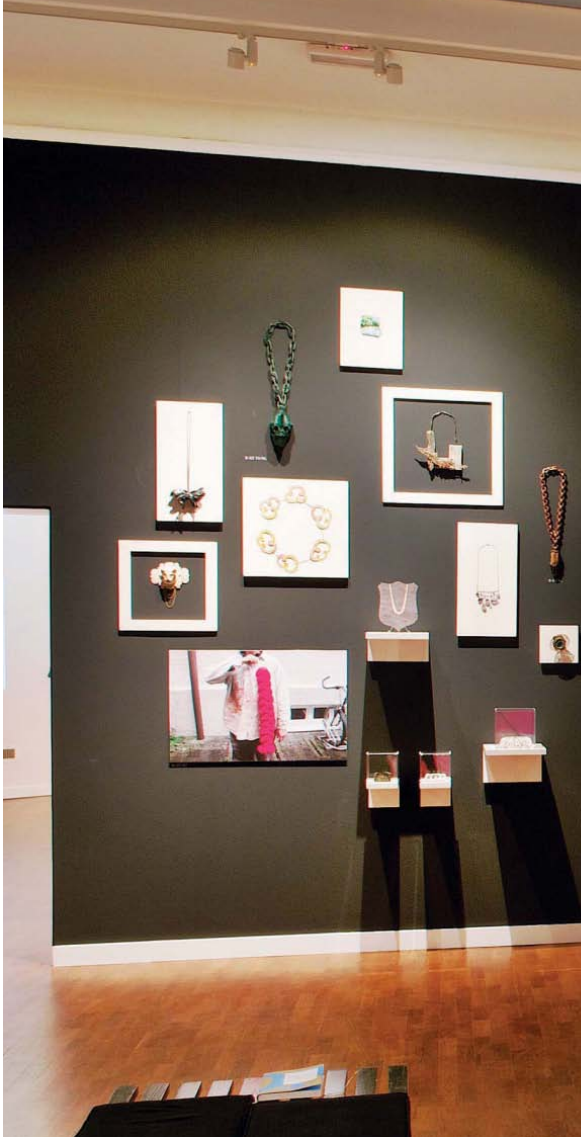
THE MUSEUM VOOR Moderne Kunst (MMKA) in the city of Arnhem, sixty miles east of Amsterdam, was the picturesque setting for "Jewellery Unleashed," an ambitious and wide-ranging contemporary art-jewelry exhibition that extended its presence into the city itself with jewelry-related interventions. "Jewellery Unleashed" was organized by Liesbeth den Besten, a recognized authority on contemporary art jewelry, and someone who is eminently qualified to bring the breadth and depth of this dynamic, yet still emerging field to the general public.

The global scope of this challenging exhibition was apparent in more than two hundred works by eighty artists from twenty-five countries, including Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Japan, Israel, Korea, and the United States. Underscoring the exhibition's cutting-edge character, the majority of the pieces were made in the last three years; only a small number dated from the 1990s.

The Netherlands continues to be a leading center for art jewelry, and den Besten was able to draw from the excellent collection in the MMKA itself, as well as from stellar examples in other Dutch museums, preeminent Dutch galleries, and private collections. The unavoidable consequence of this emphasis on the rich creative output of her native Holland, a focus that may have been determined by the high costs of casting a wider net, was that jewelry from such influential centers of creativity as Italy, Japan, Korea, and the United States was underrepresented. A mere three American artists were included in the show: Melanie Bilenker, the only native-born American; Russian-born Natalya Pinchuk, who now teaches at Virginia Commonwealth University; and German-born Iris Eichenberg, who heads the metalsmithing department at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan.

STEFAN HEUSER
A Master of Self Control Narrated (brooch), 2010
mixed pills, gold

The MMKA building, constructed in 1873 as a gentlemen's club, has been greatly expanded over the years and boasts excellent viewing galleries. Visitors entered "Jewellery Unleashed" via a small, pink-walled anteroom where *Extra Button*, an installation of colorful, button-shaped brooches by Thailand's Noon Passama, led them to the three high-ceilinged galleries beyond, and to an amazing variety of objects.



The first of these galleries was transformed into a modern-day wunderkammer named for the "cabinets of curiosities" that reflected the Renaissance passion for collecting strange and exotic items from near and far. As in the historical Wunderkammer, where an entire room was filled with curious objects, the walls of the MMKA's gallery were covered with over 120 artworks in all manner of forms, reflecting the complex and highly diversified world of contemporary art jewelry. The room fairly pulsated with diversions and

"Wunderkammer" installation, Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem, The Netherlands.

entertainments that competed for a viewer's attention. In den Besten's spirited words, "I wanted it to be a feast, to show how much fun and how alive this field is today."

In discarding "safe thinking," den Besten filled the gallery with an astonishing array of pieces ranging in size from miniscule to huge. Much of the work was made from unorthodox materials; some items blurred the lines between jewelry, sculpture and design. Among the latter crossover works were Gesine Hackenberg's *Kitchen Necklace* made from Luneville earthenware and thread, and Hilde De Decker's *Jammeke*, an after-image of a necklace printed on paper covered with cartoons taken from a 1950s Flemish comic book series. Other memorable works in this visual cacophony included Stefan Heuser's three self-portrait head brooches, each molded from Viagra and sleeping pills, each titled *A Master of Self-Control Narrated*, and each intended to be worn on the shoulder; David Bielander's *Scampi*, a bracelet made from copper-plated silver and rubber bands; and Natalya Pinchuk's organically inspired brooch *Growth*, made from wool, copper, enamel, leather, plastic, and wax.

The subversive subtext questioning the nature of jewelry as ornament was one of the many pleasures of the wunderkammer.

The subversive subtext questioning the nature of jewelry as ornament was one of the many pleasures of the wunderkammer. High above a doorway, Maria Vuorinen's soundless video *Not Enough* (2006), in which she decorates every part of her body she can reach with red lipstick kiss marks,

MIA MALJOJOKI
Eruption (installation view), 2011
two video projections, 20 jewelry pieces in textile and wood

LIESBET BUSSCHE
Urban Jewellery: Brooch, 2011
stainless steel
(trolley stop installation)

alternated with a short, but raucous video by Silvia Weidenbach, *Made to Treasure and Pleasure* (2011). Ted Noten's 1998 video, *Chew Your Own Brooch*, in which a woman takes obvious delight in chewing a stick of gum into different shapes that she then pastes on her sweater, worked particularly well in this regard. (Noten's actual chewing gum brooches made in gold-plated silver appeared in another gallery in the exhibition).

Regrettably, many pieces were displayed high up on the gallery's lofty walls and could be viewed only with difficulty from far below. This curatorial choice undercut the intended sense of wonder that a close study of the objects would have produced.

Given her interest in jewelry's public and social role, den Besten arranged for "Jewellery Unleashed" to extend outside the museum walls.

Another uncomfortable aspect of the show was the lack of identification alongside each object, obligating the viewer to sort through index numbers in the exhibition guide for a description of each object. It was den Besten's intention, however, to use the numerical codes as part of a delightful treasure hunt.

In sharp contrast to the Wunderkammer, the next gallery offered finely crafted vitrines containing orderly arrangements of traditional forms—rings, chains, and ornaments (including brooches, and necklaces)—as well as sensitive groupings of objects according to themes such as Love & Loss and Memory. Here, Melanie Bilenker's intimate narratives of everyday events delicately delineated in strands of her own hair were featured along with other works about memory. Almost half of the space in this gallery was dedicated to *Eruption*, an installation consisting of twenty new jewelry pieces in mixed media by Finnish artist Mia Maljojoki. Created in a forceful,

almost destructive, manner by means of cutting, smashing, drilling, spraying and burning, Maljojoki's pieces were brought to life amidst video projections of recent violent volcanic eruptions in Iceland.

In the third and final gallery, jewelry was grouped according to materials: splendid pendants in gold by Marc Monzo and a delightful taxidermy pigeon with a gold beak, *lo ce l'ho d'oro* by Benjamin Lignel; exquisite enamel brooches by Anna Maria Zanella; and inspiring works in stone, both precious and semi-precious, including three Bettina Dittlmann brooches, Philip Sajet's and Karl Fritsch's pioneering rings, along with Helen Britton's brooch in silver, glass and diamonds. Recycling, a widespread practice and informing concept in contemporary art jewelry, was evident in Lisa Walker's pendant *The Last Six Months of Rubbish from My Munich Workshop Floor*, and also informed Mikiko Minewaki's necklaces from recovered plastic. The same gallery featured a number of intriguing larger installations, including Inner Beauty by Frédéric Braham, a tabletop array of bottles containing his "drinkable jewelry"—doses of jewelry substances, including diamonds, gold, pearls, rubies, and emeralds, all dissolved in fluid. The viewer is meant to ingest the work so that the liquid jewelry can make its way into the body and take effect.

The thematic groupings of the works in the last two galleries were readily accessible, especially for newcomers to the field, and their instructive wall texts and labels were crucial to navigating the mind-bending leap into contemporary art jewelry's outer limits as presented in the Wunderkammer. In tribute to den Besten's curatorial concept, it can be noted that more than a few visitors were seen returning to this first part of the exhibition with renewed curiosity.

Given her interest in jewelry's public and social role, den Besten arranged for "Jewellery Unleashed" to extend outside the museum walls. She "pimped" (in her words) the prominent MMKA museum logo with sparkling Swarovski crystals and converted the museum's trolley stop into a colossal brooch by attaching a giant pin-stem to it. In yet another engaging action, Ted Noten's posters, each bearing a different political comment or anecdote about the "world behind jewelry," were posted strategically around the city. Resolute jewelry enthusiasts, who scanned the barcodes on all the posters with a smart-phone, and brought evidence of their pursuit back to the museum shop, received a rapid-prototyped ring designed by the Ted Noten Studio. Compounding the fun and further broadcasting the exhibition's message, a nearby brasserie exhibited fifteen large photographs of average Dutch citizens wearing art jewelry, while waitresses sported "affordable" silver jewelry made for them by noted Arnhem goldsmith and jewelry designer Alexander van den Hoven. Guests were served on take-home paper placemats printed with jewelry designs that could be cut out, glued onto durable material, and worn.

For passionate devotees of contemporary art jewelry, "Jewellery Unleashed" was a rewarding and successful realization of its ambitious goal of conveying the diversity and vitality of contemporary jewelry as both an enjoyable and edifying experience. For newcomers to the field, it must have been nothing short of an eye-opener. One hopes that through other venues, this stimulating exhibition will have a long-lasting impact far beyond Holland's borders.

Ursula Ilse Neuman is curator of jewelry at the Museum of Arts and Design.

Furthermore:
www.mmkarnhem.nl

GESINE HACKENBERG
Kitchen Necklace, 2010
Lunéville faience earthenware, textile

A Touch of Alchemy
Contemporary Enamel

BY MARIANNE HUNTER

ENAMEL AS A medium is flexing its artistic muscles, showing its adaptability to myriad forms and visions. The pieces shown here were drawn from *Alchemy*, the Enamelist Society's 13th Biennial International Juried Exhibition, which showcases the best in contemporary enamelwork from the preceding two years. These images are just a sampling of the wide-ranging works in the field, which span international borders, aesthetic styles, and all levels of technical expertise, from novice to master jeweler. Within the limited space allotted, I chose pieces that best illustrate the versatility of the enamel medium: understated, bold, ornamental, political, realistic, abstract, miniature, oversized, sculptural, wall–art, art-object, jewelry, vessels, serene, mocking, Goth, sexual, pure color, tromp l'oeil, delicate, indestructible. To achieve these dramatically varied effects, enamel artists use both classic and cutting-edge techniques such as: champlevé, cloisonné, sifting, painting, plique-à-jour, sgraffito, etching, photography, decals, over/under-firing, kiln or torch fired. Some pieces are pure enamel-on-metal (silver, gold, copper, steel, aluminum, wire mesh), others an exercise in mixed media. But in every case, the enamelists—alchemists all!—show how glass and metal can be transformed into magical objects.

Marianne Hunter is a self-taught, full-time studio enamelist art jeweler, who has been working for the past 45 years.

MARTHA BANYAS
Guardians: Restoring Balance, 2010
enamel, copper, wood backing
8 ᶻ x 7 ¼ x 2"
PHOTO: PAUL FOSTER

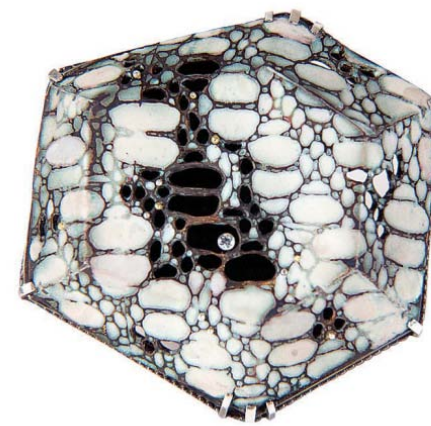
NICHOLAS HEYL
Catch My Disease (vessel), 2010
enamel, copper
3 x 2 x 2"

LYDIA GERBIG-FAST
Somewhere There's a Girl Out There...
(tiara), 2005
sterling silver, fine silver, copper, 18k gold, pearls
1 ¾ x 6 ½ x ½"

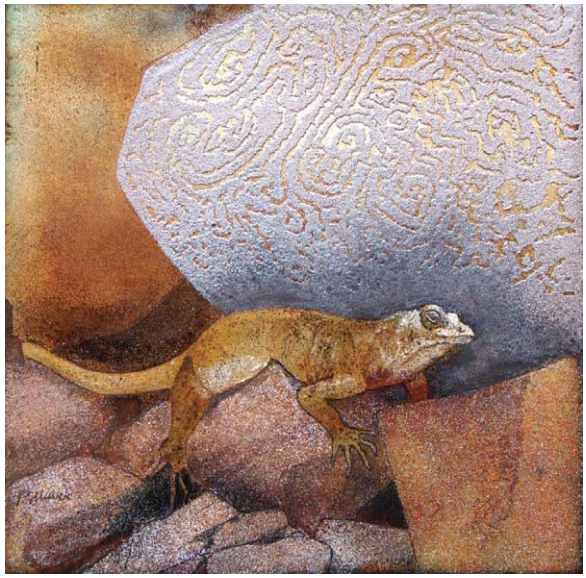
KRISTINA GLICK
... Imagination Moons (brooches), 2009
enamel, electroformed copper
under 2"
PHOTO: CRAIG GLICK MILLER

JAN HARRELL
.... Body Powder Buff from "Vanity Set For The Muse" series, 2010
enamel, leather belt, sterling silver, copper, brass, wood, fluffy fabric
13 x 9 x 10"
PHOTO: JACK ZILKER

JEANIE PRATT
Fact or Fantasy (necklace), 2010
sterling silver, fine silver, niobium, 22k, 18k, and 14k gold, butterfly wings, opal, ammolite, star sapphire, amber, rutilated quartz, citrine, green topaz, peridot, freshwater pearls, enamel, resin
13 x 7 x .4"
PHOTO: HAP SAKWA



ALICIA BOSWELL
Ossify (brooch), 2010
copper, enamel, sapphire, paint, stainless steel
2 ½ x 2 ½ x 1 ½"
PHOTO: MATT COOK



PAT MUSICK
Archivist, 2010
enamel, copper
8 x 8"

SOOHYE PARK
Nuance I (brooch), 2010
enamel, copper, wood, pins
3 ¾ x 1 x 1 ⅛"

JESSICA CALDERWOOD
Conceal, 2011
enamel, copper, laser-cut steel, brass, resin
16 ½ x 20 ¼ x 3 ¾"

Furthermore:
www.enamelistsociety.org.
www.hunter-studios.com

Ubaldo Vitali
The Lover and the Beloved

BY GLEN R. BROWN

Tureen for "Risotto alla Pescatore," 2001
silver, sodalite
6 ½ x 21 ¼ x 13"
COLLECTION SMITHSONIAN
AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

Singerie Candlestick and *Crab and Urchin Candlestick*, 1976
Silver
2 ⅛ x 8 ¼ x 6 ¼"

UBALDO VITALI REMEMBERS the Rome of his youth as a place where inspired souls "could do anything, direct a movie or be an art historian, with the same freedom." Clearly, that Rome of unrestrained aspirations has persisted in his reflections on art and exerted a lasting influence over his decisions in life. An artist recognized as one of the greatest living silversmiths in the United States, a master conservator who has restored some of history's rarest treasures, an aficionado of architecture and music, a scholarly researcher and author, and the recipient of a 2011 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship award (known popularly as the "genius grant"), Vitali exemplifies the kind of artist-intellectual who transcends specialization to excel in multiple pursuits.

A fourth-generation silversmith, he developed his love for metalworking under the mentorship of his father and grandfather in a family workshop just a stone's throw from the Spanish Steps. As a young man, he attended the Liceo Artistico Ripetta, where an academic curriculum of drawing, painting, and art history reinforced his respect for technical and aesthetic universals. Later, as a student of sculpture at the Accademia di Belle Arti, he would succumb to the liberating spirit of the1960s, exploring new media, materials and ideas. He emerged from his training bearing a keen appreciation for abstraction and even non-objective form but also a persistent skepticism toward a central concept in modernism: the avant-garde. "I found that the avant-garde many times leads nowhere," he explains, "so you have to come back to what I call the aesthetic primordial soup. I try not to close my eyes and my soul to the past."

Circumvention of the avant-garde in order to unearth the riches of art history was practiced in Rome most conspicuously in the latter half of the 20th century by Vitali's contemporary the postmodern painter Sandro Chia, whom the critic Achille Bonito Oliva would famously champion as a harbinger of a new *Transavanguardia* (literally, beyond the avant-garde). If Vitali's historical eclecticism is less overt than that of Chia and other Italian Neo-Expressionists, his attitude toward history is identical to theirs. "I do not distinguish between the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, or the 17th or 18th centuries," he asserts. "I find that they're all parts of a continuum. There is no separation. I think that a Rococo object, not as a whole, but in specific ways, is as modern as we are. We think of many things as particular to our time, but they have always existed. We can select from among those things; we can take from the Middle Ages."

Ribbed Conical Bowl, 1976
silver
2 ¾ x 5 ¼" diam.

The Meadowlands Pace Trophy, 2000
silver, wood
15 11/16 x 13 5/16" diam.

Despite its indifference to the avant-garde, Vitali's appropriation of historical art is not, in the end, typical of postmodernism—at least not of the deconstructive variety. He is too enamored of historical masterpieces to wish to strip them of their meanings for the sake of theoretical polemics. On the contrary, he finds in them a confirmation of the universality of art, since they bear within them aspects of what he loosely describes as "structure"—a quality eternally meaningful to the human mind. Vitali's own pursuit of this structure is largely intuitive and as little mediated as possible. His guide has been the lasting impression of his mentors, including artist and old family friend Pericle Fazzini, his professor at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence, and the elderly painter Cafiero Luperini. "Professore Luperini showed me that when he painted, he didn't need a palette," Vitali recalls. "He put his color in one hand, and with his thumb and his fingers he would paint on the canvas. He said, 'Ubaldo, you're not losing anything. You go directly from the color in one hand and use the other hand. There is no missing link.'"

That kind of immediacy became integral to Vitali's approach to silver, despite his primary visual inspiration in the clean profiles and planar, Art Deco designs of early 20th-century French silversmith Jean Puiforcat. For Vitali, Puiforcat embodied the perfect balance between a modern receptiveness to the expressive potential of simple, largely geometric forms and a traditionalist's capacity to discern universality in historical examples of metalwork. "Here was a man who could express himself in a modern way without forgetting the past," Vitali observes of Puiforcat. "Obviously, you cannot see any Baroque or Rococo elements in his form, but in a certain way they are there. He mixed silver with white wood, lapis lazuli, other stones and crystal. That's Baroque, isn't it? He took a Baroque language and translated it into a modern form of expression."

Like Puiforcat, Vitali has combined silver with materials such as beech, maple, ebony and glass in a manner that is at once contemporary and historically evocative. His concept of structure is linked to a particular perspective on mass and volume that he acquired partly as a consequence of his admiration for the 18th century artistic polymath Thomas Germain. Goldsmith to Louis the

He is too enamored of historical masterpieces to wish to strip them of their meanings for the sake of theoretical polemics.

Baroque Church Pitcher, 1989
silver, glass
9 x 6 ½ x 6 1⁄16"

T-Form Two-Light Candelabrum, 1999
silver, glass
12 ¼ x 9 ¾ x 4 ¼"

XV and creator of perhaps the finest silver tureens ever produced, Germain was also a sculptor and a some-time architect who in 1720 designed the aisleless church of St. Louis du Louvre. Long an advocate of "peripheral vision" rather than the narrow focus of specialization, Vitali was so intrigued by Germain's mastery of multiple fields of creative endeavor that he enrolled in the Università di Roma to study architecture. Though never intending to practice professionally, he aspired to see through an architect's eyes. "Germain was an architect, a sculptor, and the greatest of goldsmiths," Vitali argues. "So I thought that perhaps one of the ways to become great was to merge those three things together. That's how I trained myself. Silver, for me, is all of those things together."

As might be inferred from his enthusiasm for this amalgam of artistic roles, Vitali is inclined to conceive of art making primarily in an abstract sense rather than from the confines of a specific medium or technical specialty. One concept in particular makes possible the ease with which he blends the perspectives of silversmith, sculptor and architect: that of rhythm. Analogous to the quality of rhythm in music, the rhythms that Vitali pursues in his sketching, his modeling, and his metalworking are universally comprehensible because they resonate with inclinations harbored deep within the human mind. These rhythms connect with "your spirit, your soul," he asserts. "In silver or in sculpture too, the rhythms are actually like a dance. Music is essential. Take for instance the *Tureen for Risotto alla Pescatore* [2001, The Renwick gallery]. When I modeled it in clay I was listening to the melodic flow of Tchaikovsky's *Barcarolle* because I wanted a movement to the wave. There was no better way for me to achieve that than to base my wave on that music. When you listen to something and you mold a piece of clay—because that's how it was modeled—the music goes through your ears to your spirit. It's transformed through your hands, through the modeling."

In order to enter into the greatest harmony with such rhythms, Vitali no longer renders finished drawings as designs for his works in silver. Rather, he sketches rapidly, relying on bold strokes of the pencil to preserve spontaneity—or, as he describes it, freedom. This freedom should not, however, be mistaken for rebellion against the fundamental element of structure: structure and rhythm are not in opposition to one another. On the contrary, they are vitally intertwined, and freedom is largely a matter of responding to them rather than referring back to the prescriptions of a preliminary design. "Why interrupt creation?," Vitali asks. "Borromini, in

Mondrian Bowl, 1999
patinated bronze, silver plate
5 ⅛ x 11 ¾ x 11 ¾"

his church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, was constantly changing things as he was working; the structure was there, but he was constantly changing it because of the shadows. He abandoned his drawings, his first ideas, but they're still there. When you walk into most of Borromini's churches you feel that there is this tremendous geometric organization of everything, but you don't actually see it."

What *is* most indicative of rhythm and structure—in Vitali's silver work as much as in Borromini's architecture—is not, or at least not simply, the disposition of physical planes, masses, and volumes. More important is the expressive deployment of light, which, perhaps not incidentally, is considered by most art historians to be diagnostic of the Baroque. In the works of Vitali, light is the formal element that is orchestrated most intuitively—so much so, in fact, that he could experience an epiphany during an exhibition where one of his silver tureens was on display. The play of light and shadow created by the tureen upon the gallery walls seemed to reproduce the first sketch that Vitali had rendered for the piece. A defining structure, though embodied so subtly by the tureen itself that even the artist could not easily discern it in the physical form, was projected unmistakably upon the walls by the interaction of light and the nuances of the tureen's surfaces. For Vitali, an analogy could be made to the way that structure is conveyed abstractly to the human eye and, ultimately, the mind of the perceiver.

"I've always thought that the first kinetic art was silver, because when you turn it around, it changes."

The idea of structure conveyed through light can be easily reconciled with Vitali's concept of rhythm, since light is a form of energy that, due to its wavelike properties, is fundamentally inseparable from motion. Vitali recalls that during his student days a teacher stressed the ability of light to communicate structure when he drew anamorphic images that could only be recognized in reflections on a cylinder of polished metal. The images, in other words, did not exist independently of the modulation of light. Vitali immediately grasped the lesson. "These things make such an impression that you realize that they're part of art," he says. "Why shouldn't we be able to use them? There was a period in which kinetic art became popular, but I've always thought that the first kinetic art was silver, because when you turn it around, it changes. A sculpture in silver might reflect the light or absorb it, but it's essentially kinetic art. I don't know how to explain it, but there is this constant

Centerpiece, 1986
sterling silver, silver gilt,
bleached maple, glass
18 ¼ x 14 x 14"

50th Anniversary Centerpiece, 1994
silver, glass
24 x 20" diam.

Cup, 1980
silver, gilding
4 x 4 ¾"

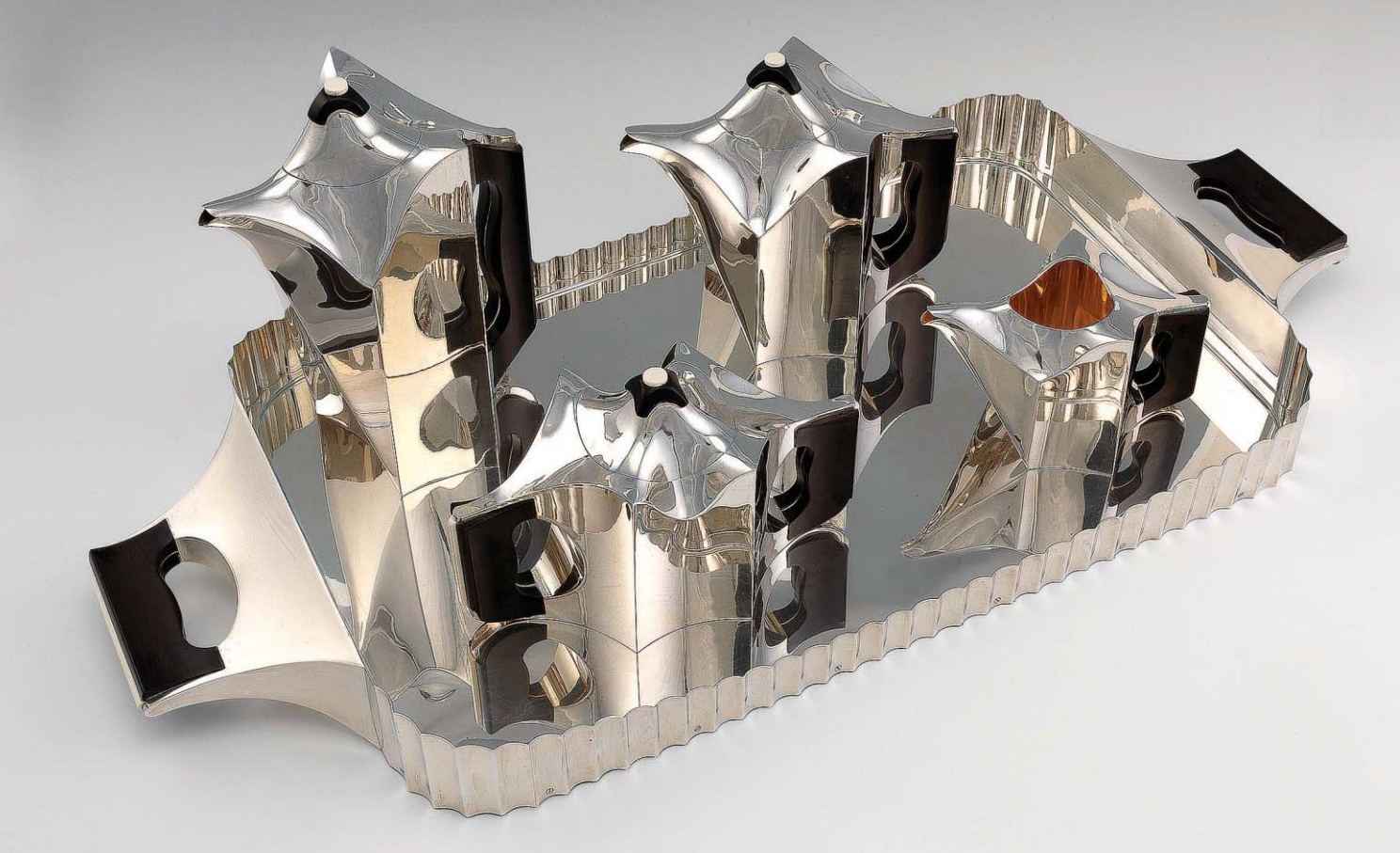
movement in silver. It's a constant vibration."

To attribute this "vibration" entirely to optics would be to miss Vitali's point. As an artist he is as much concerned with the metaphorical attributes of silver and the connotations that they impart to the mind as he is with the physics of metallic surfaces. He speaks poetically of "listening" to silver, of entering into dialogue with it, of succumbing to its "magic power" exactly as he might be overwhelmed by sensuality in an affair of the heart. Attributing to silver an archetypal femininity, he posits himself as a lover and the silver object as the beloved in a relationship as instinctual and as difficult to articulate as the stirrings of the soul elicited by moonlight. The mystery of this relationship is for Vitali universal, and, consequently, the language that he most often employs to grasp it is borrowed from alchemy, a historical tradition of seeking universals through the intermingling of mysticism and the inchoate features of modern science.

Distillation is the foremost of several metaphors that Vitali has drawn from alchemy to inform his thoughts on artistic creativity. In its literal sense, distillation involves separating components of liquids through boiling and condensing, but figuratively it suggests a process of conceptual purification. For Vitali, abstraction conceived as distillation implies a reduction to pure essences and the opening of avenues to the sublime. "Distillation is a very important thing for me," he explains. "When a form comes into your mind you have to purify it somehow. If not, you just filter it. You have to turn it into a vapor and let it come down again. That's why I find it beautiful when people say that in modern art less is more. It's beautiful when there's distillation of something very deep and important. You've actually abstracted the essence of something. It cannot just be that you took the sediment out."

Attributing to silver an archetypal femininity, he posits himself as a lover and the silver object as the beloved.

Closely connected with distillation in Vitali's alchemical terminology is sublimation, which, in the context of chemistry, refers to the transition of a substance such as dry ice directly from a solid to a gaseous state without ever passing through the liquid phase. The once impenetrable mystery of this transformation, like the mystery that today surrounds the discontinuous leaps of electrons from one quantum state to another, is for Vitali equivalent to the most sublime and inexplicable aspect



Coffee and Tea Service, 1983-84
silver, ebony, ivory, Plixiglas
tray 33 ½ x 15"
COLLECTION OF THE NEWARK MUSEUM

of art: *un certo non-so-che* (a certain I know not what). "In sublimation you go from the first stage to the last in a way that we cannot explain," he asserts. "When I was working on the tureen for *risotto alla pescatore,* for example, I wanted to do the sea, the waves. The question that came to mind was, what geometry can I use to make a wave? I doodled around and put two hexagons in with the corners going up and down. It created a rhythm. I added a little sketch, a polyhedron, and from there I started modeling. How did the form get there? I do not know. I had the drawings as a first idea and the music in my ears, and I went from stage one to stage three."

That kind of intuitive process, crucial to creating his own work, obviously cannot serve Vitali for the exacting task of restoring priceless historical masterpieces. Nevertheless, he describes his career as a conservator using language every bit as mystical and metaphorical as that through which he reflects on artistic creation. "You can imagine what it's like for somebody who as a kid emulated Thomas Germain to be able to restore many of his most important works," says Vitali. "It's a religious experience. Silver objects maintain their genesis, and when you analyze them for conservation you can reconstruct their journey to creation. The actual genesis is right in front of you to be learned and understood. When you look at objects like these and penetrate them, it is very revealing, because in all works of art there are mistakes. It's as if they're confessing their sins to you, naked like Adam and Eve. To me, those objects have souls."

Souls are worthy of love, and in the end this simple thought may be more productive than any other for understanding the intensity of Vitali's devotion to silver, both as conservator and as artist. "People have left us things that are very important," he observes. "In my life I can well say that I have done something if I feel that I have saved such objects for the future. There's love for them like the love that you have for grandparents or great grandparents. You treasure them. You want to make sure that they don't get hurt. But then there is the love that you have for silver itself. It's a love affair. I am tremendously attracted to silver. There is sensuousness, femininity. It is so sublime, the process of creating in silver, that you cannot explain it. Of course, there's an intellectual aspect to everything, but basically it's a love making affair."

Glen R. Brown is a professor of art history and Associate Head of the Art Department at Kansas State University.

Ice Fast (brooch), 2009
enamel, photo transfer, silver,
3 x 4 ⅜ x ½"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

Kirsten Haydon
Southern Exposure

BY ALEX SELENITSCH

Ice Depot (brooch), 2011
enamel, photo transfer, silver,
copper, steel, reflector beads
3 ⅛ x 3 ⅛ x ⅜"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

Ice Industry (neckpiece), 2011
enamel, photo transfer, silver, copper, steel, reflector beads
11 x 6 ¼ x ⅜"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

Ice Dome (object), 2011
Copper, silver, enamel
5 ½ x 5 ⅞ x 5 ⅞"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

Ice Plane (brooch), 2011
enamel, photo transfer, reflector beads, silver, copper, steel
3 ⅛ x 3 ⅛ x ⅜"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

I FACE A TABLEAU by New Zealand artist Kirsten Haydon inspired by her 2004 visit to Antarctica: bits of enamel, brooches, a necklace, some cups and funnels and a small geodesic dome arrayed on a white sheet. Tones of blackened silver, steel and copper are undisguised, but they glow blue, grey and green against the intensely white background. The arrangement suggests a miniature Antarctic landscape in which Haydon's ambiguous and unconventional objects conjure images of abandoned buildings, adapted vehicles, and scientific equipment strewn over a vast glacial plain.

Haydon was one of four artists who traveled to Antarctica as part of New Zealand's Artists to Antarctica program.[1] (The other artists included a poet, a painter and a furniture designer.) Interestingly, she was not included as a metalworker or crafter, but as someone whose images might contribute to a deeper understanding of the Antarctic experience.

This way of looking at the continent marks the third phase in human understanding of this little known place. The first approach was one of exploration, valuing courage and heroism. While there were aspects of scientific inquiry and metaphysical curiosity involved, its impetus was essentially imperialistic, territorial and highly symbolic. The tragic outcome of the 1911-13 English expedition led by Robert Falcon Scott has assumed mythical status, while the centenary of Amundsen's record of being the first to reach the South Pole was recently celebrated by the Norwegian Prime minister and entourage at the Pole itself. The second phase of understanding might be described as statistical, involving geologists, meteorologists and naturalists who mainly were collecting and sifting data. While the third, art-centric, phase is not new exactly—a history of imaginative writing, set in both polar extremes has long existed—it is new in an official sense, and in that the expectation is other than documentation.

Small size, uselessness and semantic provocation are all properties shared both by souvenirs and jewelry.

The New Zealand initiative is neither original nor unique. In the 1980s, similar programs were launched in the United States, Britain and Australia. In the ongoing New Zealand program, artists travel by military plane from Christchurch, NZ, disembarking about eight hours later directly on the polar ice. The plane trip itself—the restricted view, the learned rituals of safety in a distinctly dangerous environment and the ad hoc, functionalist arrangements of equipment—serves as preparation for what's to come. Werner Herzog's film *Encounters at the End of the World*, where he and his team travel to Antarctica from New Zealand, begins with this same experience, the antithesis of tourist travel.[2]

During Haydon's eleven days in Antarctica she was taken out on many excursions. These included visits to a penguin

colony; the continent's snowless Dry Valleys; Scott's hut of 1911; Shackleton's hut of 1908; and the interior of IMAX crevasse (so called because an IMAX film was made there in 1990). Of these, the huts and the crevasse provided key impressions that were to inform the artist's works.

What made these impressions so powerful was her interest in the concept of the souvenir. People tend to pick up fragments and little objects from places they've visited and display them at home as tangible evidence that an event has occurred. In functional terms, the souvenir is useless, except as a semantic object meant to prompt memory and generate nostalgia and meditation. Souvenirs are generally small because they're easily transportable from visited site to home.

Small size, uselessness and semantic provocation are all properties shared both by souvenirs and jewelry, and it is this conjunction that inspired Haydon to begin a significant body of work after her return from Antarctica. She had already demonstrated an interest in making objects that evoke memory. Such works as *Poppy's Poppies* (2000-01) and *In the Drawer* (2002-05) both incorporated Haydon's grandfather's war souvenirs. In her Ph.D. thesis, completed in 2008, Haydon documented precedents for the use of jewelry as souvenir object.[3] These included reliquaries, commemorative rings, bracelets and more, with a special focus on 19th-century tourist jewelry using micro-mosaic and transfer-printed images. This was the background Haydon brought with her to Antarctica, a place that in turn provoked her in ways she couldn't have predicted.

For instance, the continent's extreme climate produces a unique relationship between interior and exterior space. In benign climates, the inside/outside environment can blur and be exploited as a zone of slow change and even total occupation. In Antarctica, one is either totally in or totally out, and when out, one is totally inside clothing. This clear division produces a porthole view of the exterior. Beginning with the flight in, this tightly framed perspective of nothing but white in all of its refracted colors became one of Haydon's source images.

Yet another interior experience concerned the utensils in Scott's hut, particularly the enamelware cups, colanders, bowls and funnels that have been left untouched for over fifty years. Haydon was also deeply impressed by her tour of the IMAX crevasse, whose interior provides an experience of light and color saturation in a non-directional space. But Haydon's greatest surprise came from ice crystals she brought to the surface to photograph in better light. Her photos revealed a hexagonal crystalline structure that would also influence her work.

Unsurprisingly, exteriors also provided inspiration. Antarctica's bases are settlements of unusual buildings, vehicles, machines and structures, many of which are container-like forms, with ad hoc parts and elements connecting them to the landscape. And then there was the ice and snow, which in Antarctica generates monumental surfaces and spaces, largely white, with refractions of

Sample of ice from IMAX crevasse
2004, Antarctica
PHOTO: KIRSTEN HAYDON

Ice Falls (neckpiece), 2006
enamel, oxidised silver, copper, reflector beads, paint
11 ¾ x 8 ¼ x ¾"

Selection of enamel samples 2009-2011
enamel, copper, steel, reclaimed steel,
silver, reflector beads
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

Ice Domes (neckpiece), 2005
enamel, copper, oxidised silver
9 ⅞ x 9 ⅞ x 1 ½"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

Ice Travels (brooch), 2006
enamel, oxidised silver, copper, paint,
reflector beads, steel
4 ¾ x 4 ¾ x 3 ½"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

luminous blues, greens, yellows and reds.

Haydon used the image of the porthole, together with mechanical components and hexagonal patterning as forms for exploration, while the enamel utensils in the historic huts provided the material prompt for much of Haydon's works. To enamel's smooth, reflective surface—produced under intense heat yet cool to the touch—Haydon added reflective glass beads typically used for road markings. The beads also provide a tactile element that further suggests the texture of snow.

The many and varied impressions gained from Haydon's Antarctic experience provided her with a "zone" from which a collection of jewelry and objects has emerged. The zone atmosphere is aptly captured in Haydon's photographs of the in situ enamel still lifes from Scott's hut. These images have been included in several exhibition catalogues for Haydon's Antarctic works, and were clearly referenced in the scatter of objects on the white sheet at our first meeting in the artist's studio.

The jewelry pieces most evocative of her tableau are the brooches, all of which show porthole views of the ice shelf and its strange objects via photo-transfer images. They are sometimes covered with reflector beads, which blur the images and suggest precipitation. The brooches tend to be over sized, some as large as postcards. In one example, a toy-sized steel aeroplane sits on a polygonal base of white enamel representing an ice floe. When worn—and it would have to be supported on a robust fabric, like a jacket or overcoat—the brooch virtually wears the wearer, who becomes an extension of the ice shelf imagery.

Haydon used the image of the porthole, together with mechanical components and hexagonal patterning as forms for exploration.

The floe under the airplane points to another series of Haydon's works: neckpieces comprised of linked polygons that form chains. Here, various types of windows—such as those found in planes, in ground vehicles and in Shackleton's hut, as well as the newer portholes of specialist cabins—have been collapsed into chains so as to remove their horizontality and provide a flexibility, which might be interpreted as a metaphor for the fluidity of memory. The chains include rectangular modules, with corners rounded as they are for gasket-mounted windows; oval and hexagonal enamelled discs coated with reflector beads but also showing fragments of landscape and buildings; pure hexagons linked with tabs holding a pin joint; and eccentric hexagons linked by Meccano-like pieces echoing the engineering paraphernalia at the Bases, while also resonating faintly with small-boy heroics of early exploration.

Some chains are comprised only of single and angled links that create a meandering line when placed flat, or when worn around the neck and shoulders. For me the most

Ice Shifts (neckpiece), 2006
oxidised silver, paint, reflector beads
11 ¾ x 8 ¼ x ⅜"
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

evocative of Haydon's chains is *Ice Movement* 2011, a purely abstract design made of bent tubes with concealed but flexible joints that form a dancing, three-dimensional line even when laid flat. In this piece, the integration of source imagery, souvenir, and material realization is complete without the sentimental attachments that actual souvenirs can generate. It also suggests something new that might come out of the Antarctic experience.

A quality of abstraction is also evident in Haydon's utensil-like fragments. Her direct inspiration was Shackleton's hut with its rows of utensils, which have devolved into historical artifacts, and which Haydon has reinterpreted as purely semantic artworks. In a suite of objects that mimic the explorer's cups, funnels, bowls and colander, Haydon has made a series of hand-sized quasi-replicas in which she removes and adds parts, doubles their volumes (like the double circles of some of the brooches), and sometimes covers or scatters them with reflector beads. Even the ones that could be used (to drink from? to hold pencils?) are just strange enough to induce a pause before the utilitarian option might be taken.

When exhibiting these works, Haydon has always installed them in special environments to aid in the perception of their origins,. Two of these installation types, one black and one white, illustrate the artist's thinking on this matter. The black installation has had several manifestations, including *Reflections of Ice* in The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and *Room with a View* in the Christchurch Art Gallery, New Zealand. In both of these installations, the reflective works were fixed to black walls. To negotiate the space and view the works, visitors were given flashlights to help locate and illuminate the individual pieces. In the Christchurch installation, a video shot through the window of a ground transport vehicle demonstrated both the restricted porthole view and the strange space and color of the Antarctic landscape.

Haydon's objects represent her artistic response to a place, made after the fact.

Haydon's white installations take advantage of the "white cube" architecture of contemporary galleries. For her Ph.D. exhibition at the RMIT gallery in Melbourne, she used floating polystyrene slabs on trestles to suggest the ice shelf surrounding the Antarctic landmass—its form but also in its tactile softness. Polystyrene sheets were also used in "Ice Terrane" at Objectspace in New Zealand, and more formally in "Ice Structure" at Gallery Funaki in Melbourne. In that show, a video was rear-projected onto a translucent screen that covered the gallery's window so that some of Haydon's enamelled utensils appeared to passersby as monumental objects in the modelled landscape.

When any of Haydon's works are collected by a museum or an individual, the question of "souvenir" invariably

Ice Objects, 2008-2010
enamel, copper, steel, reflector beads
PHOTO: JEREMY DILLON

arises. Initially, Haydon's objects represent her artistic response to a place, made after the fact. They filter and meditate upon the visit, but they are not in any sense documentary. For Haydon, the objects exist in a liminal zone between artist's souvenirs and independent works. Once in the possession of a collector, and unlike the gifted or inherited souvenir, which stays as such, a Haydon piece becomes a work of art. That is, it acquires a semantic provocation in its new context. And here the options, as in any good artwork, are various. Haydon's works can be viewed as passports to imaginary travel, as images of a real but generally inaccessible absolute, or as tokens of having been witness to the edge of life. Fruitful paradoxes are proposed through their representations of frozen water, our major life-giving compound, and the use of high temperatures to produce cool or "frozen" objects. All of these possible responses are bound up by effects of refracted light, the intense but variable whiteness of the landscape, and the tactile attraction between materials and forms.

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Furthermore:
www.galleryfunaki.com.au
www.objectspace.org.nz
www.kirstenhaydon.com

1. Kirsten Haydon was born in New Zealand in 1973, studied contemporary jewelry design and construction at Manukau Institute of Technology, and moved to Australia in 1996 to study at RMIT University Melbourne, where she earned a Doctor of Philosophy in 2009. She is currently an Early Career Academic Development Fellow at RMIT University, and has exhibited widely in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and Japan.
2. Werner Herzog's 2008 documentary film, *Encounters at the End of the World*, was funded by the US Antarctic Artists and Writers Program, which is organized by the National Science Foundation.
3. Kirsten Haydon, *Antarctic Landscapes in the Souvenir and Jewellery: Doctor of Philosophy Thesis*. Melbourne: RMIT University, 2008.

Ice Terrane (installation) 2009,
Objectspace, New Zealand
PHOTOGRAPH: NEAL HASLEM

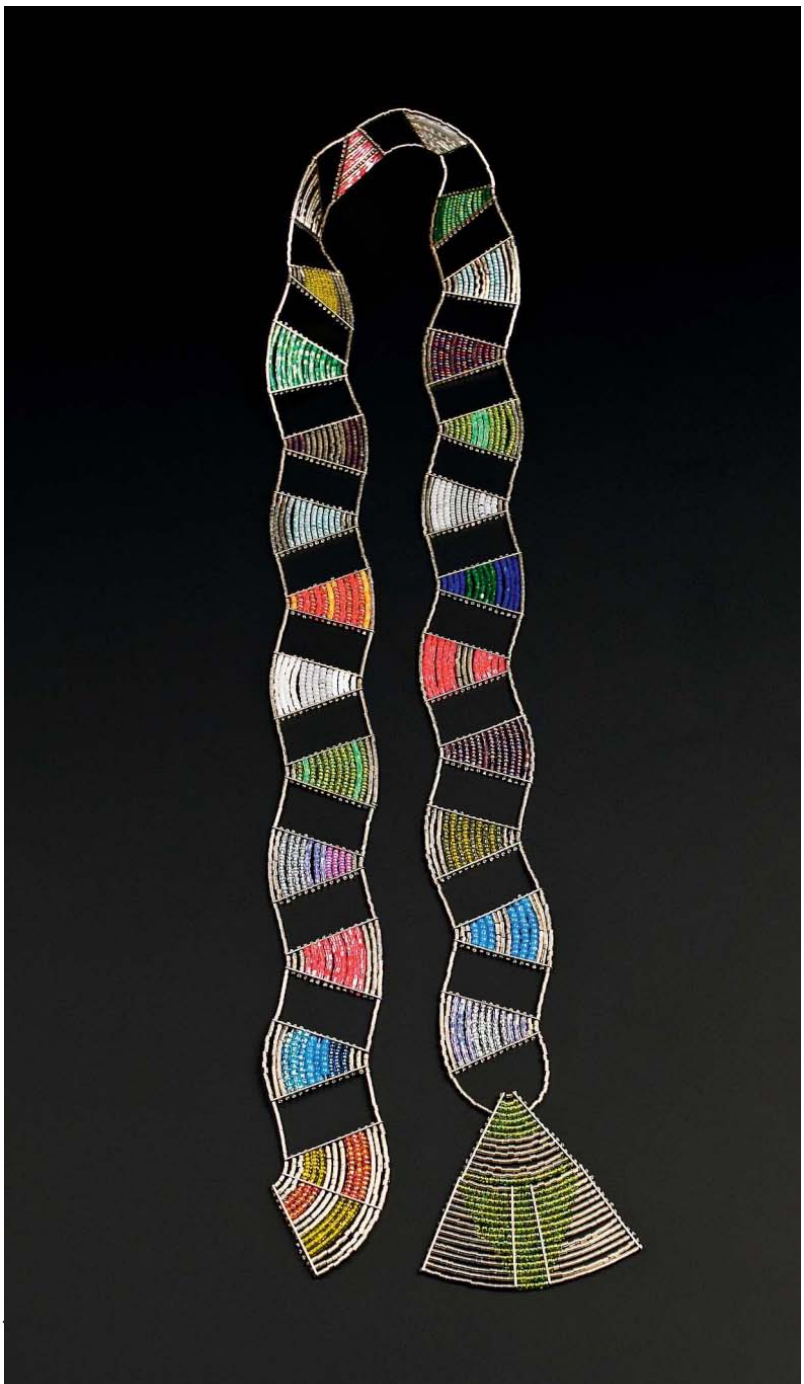
Flora Book
Soft Power

BY MATTHEW KANGAS

Hard Grid Neckpiece, 1994
silver, nylon monofilament
21 x 21"
PHOTO: ROGER SCHREIBER

Loretta's Coat, 1995
silver beads, nylon monofilament
50 x 18 x ⅛"
PHOTO: ROGER SCHREIBER

Jayne's Ribbon, ca. 1993
glass beads, silver beads, nylon monofilament
75 ½ x 1 ½ x ¼"
PHOTO: ROGER SCHREIBER



BY NOW, FLORA BOOK'S art looks much less bifurcated between her early training as a painter in New York, Ohio and Quebec and her move to Seattle in 1980, when she seriously began making jewelry. One can trace three basic areas evolving over the past 30 years: her silver-tube and nylon-monofilament jewelry; her colored-bead and recycled-paper necklaces and bracelets; and her knitted mohair-and-silver wraps.

The pre-Seattle paintings were initially colorful but began to turn gray the more she worked with silver (It might have been the cloudy winter skies, too). However, three decades later, she threaded colored glass beads over monofilament in truncated pie-slice shapes (as in *Spectrum Necklace*, 2004). Even earlier, when she worked as a designer at McCall's Patterns (a mainstay of midcentury American women who made their own clothes), Book offered body-hugging shawls that called for mixing silver chain with the finest thread by knitting them together. In between, her most celebrated work—silver-tube-over-monofilament necklaces and bracelets—accessorized slinky black or gray dresses (her favored backdrop) in the style of the 1930s Hollywood film sirens she grew up watching at her father's movie theatres in Perth Amboy, New Jersey.

Flora Book, now 85, is one of those ex-New Yorkers who became a cosmopolite in other people's cities, such as Montreal (where she studied with Wendy Shingler and met fabled collector and craft patron Saidye Bronfman), London (where she maintained a flat for a decade and lived three months of each year), and Seattle (where she confronted an aesthetic the total opposite of her own: the found objects of the Ellensburg Funky group).

Possessing a strong vision of her own that, perhaps surprisingly, was eventually influenced by that Funky sensibility with its recycled ethnic jewelry, Flora Book has mostly stood apart from this mainstream regional movement. Although Book studied with world traveler and ethnic-art maven Ramona Solberg, more influential were Solberg's restrained University of Washington School of Art colleagues John Marshall and Mary Lee Hu, the former favoring silver and the latter weaving gold wire. The English artist Caroline Broadhead sparked Book's creative epiphany, inspiring her to blend Broadhead's monofilament work with Hu's use of woven metallic wires.

The results, emerging in the 1980s and 1990s when Book was already in her

Jayne's Veil, 1996
silverbeads, nylon monofilament
12 x 26 x 12"
PHOTO: ROGER SCHREIBER

Book's elegant loops and contortions demand impossibly complex patterns and grids.

fifties, achieved instant attention and acclaim with subsequent offers of solo exhibitions in New York, London, Los Angeles, and Edinburgh. Book is now widely published and collected by numerous art museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Tacoma Art Museum, where her first retrospective survey recently closed.

Accompanied by a full-color catalogue with essays by Hu and TAM curator Rock Hushka, *The Eloquent Silver Curve: The Jewelry of Flora Book* brought together for the first time all three areas of Book's oeuvre and effectively contradicted the notion that she is primarily a maker of simple silver jewelry.

To the degree that most of her work concentrates on manipulating hard silver into soft shapes, it *is* simple. However, Book's elegant loops and contortions demand impossibly complex patterns and grids (as in *Jayne's Veil*, 1996). Only when worn do they activate, or come alive, more as flowing kinetic sculptures than as "site-specific sculpture for the dynamic human body," as Seattle Art Museum curator Vicki Halper put it in 1993. Notably, Book now acknowledges the influence of constructivism on her work, evident in the movement and quiet jostling of the silver elements against the body.

The abstract and often kinetic forms of constructivist sculptors László Moholy-Nagy, Antoine Pevsner, and his brother, Naum Gabo share the silvery color, interlocking sections and parallel planes that Book employs. In a remarkable coincidence, while living in London, Book was befriended by Gabo's widow, Miriam, who, says Book, "commissioned me to make a hair ornament for her daughter." In fact, it was Miriam Gabo who "would do the nylon stringing in [Naum] Gabo's pieces."

Although they met at a lunch in Book's flat, Book

Untitled (neckpiece), 2007
reclaimed Mylar potato chip bags, thread
diameter 18"
PHOTO: ROGER SCHREIBER

I'd Rather Be in the Museum Than in the Kitchen, 2011
museum admission tags, steel armature
diameter 15 ½"
PHOTO: ROGER SCHREIBER

and Miriam Gabo went on to exchange letters about the commission and a number of other pieces Book eventually made for Mrs. Gabo's daughter, Nina. When first contacting Book from her home in Middlebury, Connecticut, Miriam Gabo wrote, "I would like to give [my daughter] as a present something to wear in her hair, perhaps a comb of your design or maybe some sort of ring thing to hold her top knot in place. Or maybe some hairpins with interesting ends to stick out. . . I'll never forget the delightful lunch party at your London flat and all the beautiful things you showed us."

Both Moholy-Nagy's *Light-Space Modulator* series (1923-30) and Gabo's *Column* (1923), though stationary sculptures, imply movement through the reflection of light off metal. This aspect of constructivist sculpture is softened and humanized by Book in her own work. Her subversive deconstruction of the heavy mass of much sculptural jewelry is akin to the creation of see-through volumes evident in Pevsner's and Gabo's sculptures, as is her flexible adaptation of their grids.

Book extended her soft constructivist strategy to other "hard" materials besides silver, including plastic, paper, and even museum admission tags, as in *I'd Rather Be in the Museum Than in the Kitchen* (2011). Such an approach to other glossy materials fit perfectly with the artist's interest in capturing the glamour of silver lamé gowns worn by Hollywood bombshells like Jean Harlow. If only Harlow could have worn Book's *Guenevere's Wrap* (2009) of knit silver chain and wool, or better yet, her scanty *Lady Godiva's Bib* (2004).

Although Book's objects are eminently wearable, there is still a theatricality that catches the eye and forces the viewer (or lover) to concentrate on the shape of the body beneath the art. Popular with younger as well as older women, Book's magical silver creations are sensually, if not sexually, charged. But what has attracted museum curators to Book is her broad range of art-historical and cultural references. Medieval chain mail comes to mind in some; Egyptian or Ethiopian ceremonial conventions arise in others (as in *Cleopatra's Collar*, 1991). With the advent of color in Book's art, woven West African Kente cloth suggests itself as a possible inspiration, but so do the paintings of Austrian *Jugendstil* artist Gustav Klimt, as the artist herself mentioned in a 2004 interview. Book's *Maasai* series of necklaces and bracelets (1993) borrows the fierce strength of male spear-carriers who traditionally wear similar beaded ornaments.

Despite having once produced two notable garments—*Loretta's Coat* (1995) and *Loretta's Pectoral* (1996)—Book continues to entertain the possibility of all-silver dresses or other types of clothing. With her track record of accomplishment and follow-through, such fashion projects would surely garner additional interest in her work and would be a natural, inevitable direction for Flora Book's artistic bravura.

Matthew Kangas, a Seattle-based writer, is the author of the recent Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object.

Book extended her soft constructivist strategy to other "hard" materials besides silver, including plastic, paper, and even museum admission tags.

Lady Godiva's Bib, 2004
silver
PHOTO: ROGER SCHREIBER

Robert Longyear
Hip-Hop Hybrid

BY BRUCE METCALF

Insular Eights #2, 2010
Robert Longyear + Alicia LaChance
sterling silver, steel, copper, romance novel pages, insulation, vinyl, wax
3 ½ x 3 x 1 ½"
COURTESY OF CHARON KRANSEN ARTS
PHOTO: DON CASPER

Insular Eights #8, 2010
sterling silver, steel, copper, romance novel pages, insulation, vinyl, wax
4 ½ x 3 x 1 ½"
COURTESY OF CHARON KRANSEN ARTS
PHOTO: DON CASPER

}}}}}}}i{{{{{{{{ #12, 2011
sterling silver, steel, copper, insulation
4 x 4 x 2 ½"
COURTESY OF CHARON KRANSEN ARTS
PHOTO: DON CASPER

}}}}}}}i{{{{{{{{ #8, 2011
sterling silver, steel, copper, insulation
4 x 4 x 2 ½"
COURTESY OF CHARON KRANSEN ARTS
PHOTO: DON CASPER

ROBERT LONGYEAR IS a visual artist with academic jewelry training, but his work extends far beyond the friendly confines of craft. He makes sculptures, collages and installations; he takes photographs; and he is an astonishingly prolific poet. Longyear is informed by a generational change in taste that is near revolutionary. But unlike many of his peers he has espoused a true 21st century humanism devoid of the ironic distancing that has characterized contemporary art for the past 30 years.

To understand Longyear's work, a few background facts must be established. He is profoundly influenced by hip-hop —not the misogynistic and testosterone-addled bragging that most adults abhor in the music, but in the democratic nature of the form. Anybody can do hip-hop, and amateurs are encouraged. Hip-hop stars invariably come from very humble beginnings, and their stories can be empowering, both for disadvantaged youth and artists alike. Hip-hop also stands for expressive freedom and structured spontaneity, both important aspects of Longyear's work. There's also a fearless do-it-yourself attitude to hip-hop and a certain impatience with authority expressed through tagging. Longyear has adopted these postures, as well, but he is no mere copycat, jealously imitating African-American rappers for their romantic air of authenticity. He might affect some aspects of street style, like the baseball cap with the flat bill worn off to the side, but he has distanced himself from the language of hip-hop and the regressive values it can convey.

Longyear earned a BFA in jewelry/metals from the University of Kansas in 2000, and an MFA from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville in 2009. He fully understands that studio jewelry is typically all about control and a somewhat passive acceptance of limits. There's so much timid, convention-bound jewelry out there, and Longyear will have none of it. He rejects both the fetishization of control and any sense of boundaries. However, he still retains a commitment to jewelry itself, while embracing the profound changes—hybridization, really—taking place in the arts these days. A lot of the new art combines genres that once stood definitively apart from one another: opera and happenings; installation and glass blowing. It's as if the concept of collage has been extended from disparate images to the embrace of entire genres that new art layers one on top of another. Young artists don't necessarily disrespect traditional genres, but they tend to see them as semiotic units that can be recombined at will. Each traditional artform brings its own particular history and codes of meaning to the project at hand. When one form is overlaid on another, all kinds of interesting things can happen. There can be clashes and conflicts, but there can also be delight and surprise. To a young artist, it's all good.

The younger generation also rejects the notion of the artist as solitary genius toiling alone in his studio. *So* old-fashioned. Many young iconoclasts choose collaboration and community-based work instead. This approach has been given some theoretical credence by Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*. However, I doubt Longyear shares

Seven Ten Split, 2010 (multi-media installation)
Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, St. Louis, MO
PHOTO: ROBERT LONGYEAR

Bourriaud's disinterest in the visual component of art. For Longyear, cooperation is simply one more tool in his toolkit, not a primary artistic goal. It's just another element in his mix-and-match sensibility.

Longyear is emphatically part of this generational shift. He is not interested in making a nicely resolved object that sits on a pedestal in a clean white space, ready for aesthetic delectation. For him, aesthetics—the business of beauty and its analogs—is not a major concern. Instead, he thinks in terms of process, collision of forms and the potential social impact of art. To Longyear, art-making is an adventure. It's about taking risks, and not being afraid of failure. It's a combination of poetry and anything else. It's setting up a structure and seeing what happens. It's thinking on the fly. It's getting people involved.

Poetry is the one constant in Longyear's otherwise eclectic work. His metaphors derive from his poems, which have a strong hip-hop flavor. The poems may seem to be improvised, but that's only partly true. Longyear relies on a set of similes and metaphors, which he can then vary much like a jazz musician uses a melody as a starting-point for improvisation. For Longyear, the riffing might take place in a performance, but it might also be integral to an installation, a community project, or a piece of jewelry.

Take a recent project he calls "Seven Ten Split." On one level, it's visual evidence of his forays into abandoned factory buildings and a public school warehouse, collecting discarded objects for repurposing into an installation. The fact that this material represents a kind of urban archeology, a remembrance of the days when St. Louis was vital and prosperous, lends the work great poignancy. In their raw state, abandoned and useless, these objects evoke profound sadness. But Longyear revives and redeems them, giving them a measure of dignity. Such redemption is difficult though—as difficult as making a seven-ten split in bowling, but it can be done. The bowling metaphor is the overarching message of the work.

Hip-hop also stands for expressive freedom and structured spontaneity, both important aspects of Longyear's work.

In another line of poetry that accompanies "Seven Ten Split," Longyear speaks of the moment of anticipation when you are leaning forward in your chair. In his installation, the chairs are old schoolroom castoffs. What Longyear has done is shorten the two front legs, so each chair puts the sitter in a posture of expectancy. Amusingly, the sawed-off ends become a decorative element in the installation. You can see them, neatly arranged, in the foreground of a photograph.

Longyear's genuine empathy for St. Louis and its citizens is deeply moving. Earlier generations of artists might have gone into post-industrial ruins as he has, but their

A Revisionist's Draft, 2009 (installation view)
Craft Alliance in the Kranzberg Arts Center, St. Louis, MO
PHOTO: ROBERT LONGYEAR

A Revisionist's Draft #14, 2009
sterling silver, copper, 24k gold, plate glass
3 ½ x 2 ½ x 1 ½"
COURTESY OF CHARON KRANSEN ARTS
PHOTO: DON CASPER

attitude would have been either dispassionate observation (think of Bernd and Hilla Becher) or formalist artfulness (Mark di Suvero). But St. Louis has suffered greatly from the many closures and corporate restructurings it has endured, and so have its people. For Longyear, using the debris left behind is his way of ennobling the men and women who once worked in all those empty factories, and suggesting the possibility of a new life. In that sense, Longyear's work is genuinely optimistic. His fellow-feeling for the people of St. Louis is touching, and completely sincere. This is humanism at its best, devoid of cynicism and ironic distance.

When Longyear makes jewelry, he uses the same strategies of recycling and repurposing as in his sculpture. One series of brooches was inspired by his residency in an abandoned factory that once produced plastic key-chain tags. Longyear used bits and pieces of debris, including the tags themselves, to make the brooches, along with a related series of wonderful sculptures. Longyear's training as a jeweler is belied by his relaxed craftsmanship and off-the-cuff compositions, understandable because tightly controlled technique and precise placement of elements would not serve his intention. (He says he learned a certain lightness of touch in jewelry class.) Like Alexander Calder, Longyear is after a sense of immediacy, even urgency. And like a hip-hop artist, he's riffing, improvising, seeing what will happen. This openness to happenstance becomes an essential part of his work. In this sense, he's much more like an abstract expressionist painter than your average jeweler.

The funky compositions and rough craft are analogous to the cityscapes he sees every day. He speaks of these urban scenes as being fractured. But he also sees the many layers of human enterprise that these fractures represent, almost like layers of skin. There isn't necessarily any coordination between these layers. His jewelry is similarly layered and mixed-up, like an old wall covered with tattered handbills and graffiti.

When he goes on urban walks or explores abandoned factory buildings, Longyear is profoundly sensitive to the human presence remaining in what others might regard as junk. Anything can become the subject of serious consideration, once he gets past the immediate condition of abandonment to imagining what an object once represented. So, the plastic key chains are repositories of somebody's creativity and ambition: a once viable venture, now just urban debris. But those memories of better days are never

entirely erased. When Longyear adds forlorn objects to a piece of jewelry, he's also stacking up bits of people's lives. This sense of accumulation of stories is ever present.

Longyear says the most intimate of all landscapes is the body, and jewelry becomes an important part of that place, and not just in terms of visual effects. He thinks a great deal about landscapes and buildings, and he compares wearing a piece of jewelry to entering a building. The building is a shelter, a place of safety and protection from damaging elements. Similarly, jewelry offers its own protection, an aura built from all the memories and histories packed into the object.

What I find particularly interesting about Longyear's jewelry is how he turns junk into compelling compositions. The brooches may appear to be chaotic and disorganized, but they are not. In one series, for instance, Longyear placed bits of pink fiberglass insulation where one would expect to find gemstones in conventional jewelry. The substitution, both witty and entirely unexpected, links his brooch to jewelry with diamonds and rubies, though the connection is not immediately obvious.

While the jewelry is very much a solo project, Longyear also engages with communities in his work, bringing ordinary people into the artistic process. For "Seven Ten Split" he recruited local school kids to help build the installation, so they became an important part of the process. Collaboration can occur on a smaller scale, too. Longyear worked with his friend Alicia LaChance and a local clothing designer, Nina Ganci, to produce a series of collage/paintings. Longyear describes the project:

"The paintings were rendered on industrial metal shelves that Nina had found. Alicia fell in love with the distressed surfaces. We began bolting them together, then brought in Nina's garment patterns to guide the compositions. Overall, they were a conversation with modernism and painters such as Caio Fonseca and Robert Motherwell. The surfaces were spray-painted, sanded, then finally framed out with high gloss enamel. Fun stuff, some of them quite successful, and the first time with a paint brush in my hand." (email to author, February 16, 2011)

The shear breadth of Longyear 's artistic work is astonishing. He mixes mediums and forms in wildly interesting ways. It's complex, inventive and intensely visual. What's more, he believes in the power of art to heal and transform. He once wrote:

> *I'm stuffing mixed messages in bottles and dropping them in gutter so when someone gets it they'll be right where i was and maybe that'll help.*

There's not a single trace of cynicism in his work. While Longyear can sure talk the talk, he truly walks the walk.

Bruce Metcalf is a jeweler and independent scholar who lives near Philadelphia. He is co-author, with Janet Koplos, of Makers: A History of American Studio Craft.

Furthermore:
www.flypigeoncamp.blogspot.com

Longyear's training as a jeweler is belied by his relaxed craftsmanship and off-the-cuff compositions.

ROR^, #4, 2010
enamel on industrial metal shelving
42 x 36"
COURTESY OF HOFFMAN LACHANCE CONTEMPORARY
PHOTO: ROBERT LONGYEAR

Reviews

Mixed Media (Irrational Jewelry): Niki Ulehla

Gallery Lulo, Healdsburg, CA
October 8-November 22, 2011

by Ahna Adair

Niki Ulehla is a San Francisco-based emerging jewelry artist with a background in painting, drawing and marionette making. In "Mixed Media (Irrational Jewelry)," she combines twenty-two small paintings with an extensive jewelry collection, in a conceptual framework that addresses dreams, storytelling and illusion.

For this body of work Ulehla explores dream journaling as a way to capture those fleeting moments where the bizarre and the mundane interact. Formally, journal entries are displayed as text and reiterated as dreamscapes depicted in her meticulous paintings, some of which are then translated into jewelry. The paintings tell a story of sorts, presenting a cast of characters that populate Ulehla's unconscious mind: marching teeth, human-animal hybrids, and staring faces are among the fantastical images that hover over four display cases of rings and earrings. By applying function and form to her dreams, Ulehla brings the unconscious, so famously linked to ideas of repression, out in the open to be worn on the outside of the body instead of shrouded within.

Ulehla's effort to create jewelry envisioned in her dreams has resulted in inventive and clever techniques. Dredged from the unconscious, these pieces express an irrational quality, requiring the artist to rethink their design. In one pair of earrings, shrink-wrapped stones are held by clumsy prongs that squish the clear rubbery plastic instead of firmly securing the precious gems. In another example, rings feature crystals that appear to be growing upward like the tentacles of a sea anemone, an effect achieved by setting the crystals into the ends of clear tubing.

White Cluster Ring, 2011
quartz, azurite, diamond, silver and plastic tubing.
height of tubing ¾"
PHOTO: NIKI ULEHLA

Vertical Oval, 2011
18k gold, enamel
oval ¾"
PHOTO: NIKI ULEHLA

A vein of illusion runs through some of the work. From afar one group appears to be made of solid high-karat gold. The chunky pieces are reminiscent of jewelry of antiquity as the viewer gazes upon gold beads with rubies, large hoop earrings and heavy-gauge rings topped with uncut stones. But at close range you find you've been duped. The "gold" is merely plastic tubing with gold leaf applied to the interior. But instead of disappointment you experience a sense of awe and wonder. Ulehla has tricked us in a phenomenal way.

In another illusory piece, a set of rings appears to have been driven over by a steamroller. This design gesture brings to mind Cornelia Parker's "Breathless" installation consisting of 54 flattened brass musical instruments. But instead of presenting objects whose volume has been taken from them, Ulehla shows us highly crafted flatness from inception. Again, illusion forces viewers to question what they are in fact looking at.

At times one feels overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work in this show, which forces one to go back and forth between production jewelry and a concept-driven art show. On the other hand, Ulehla's tremendous display may be the deliberate presentation of her own hyper-active unconscious mind, a kind of unstoppable machine that can't be repressed but churns and produces art unceasingly. Overall, Ulehla succeeds in reaching beyond the rationality of a wakeful and conscious state to present us with a collection of jewelry that is a truly odd, surreal, and beautiful.

Ahna Adair is an artist and writer based in Oakland, California.

Micki Lippe: Layers

Curtis Steiner Gallery, Seattle
December 1-31, 2011

by Judith Wagonfeld

In the Pacific Northwest Mother Nature sows the seeds of a fertile and messy world. Vegetation knows no bounds. Leaves and pine cones fall. Plants and mushrooms sprout from decaying wood and crowd the forest floor. Creeping foliage entangles tree trunks. Rain and mist nurture this prolific and dense terrain, a haven so loved by jewelry artist Micki Lippe that she visits weekly to hike or cross-country ski. She's done so year-round for the past eleven years, gathering imagery and solace.

Lippe's immersion inspires jewelry suffused with nature's essence. "Layers," her exhibit at the Curtis Steiner Gallery in Seattle, deserves kudos for its *joie de vivre* and luxuriant installation. Rather than constrain the free-form neckpieces and earrings beneath glass, Steiner drapes them over vintage prints of seashells, fossils and botanical images. Others nestle atop crinkled brown wrapping paper and wood blocks; all inviting touch. Burgeoning with myriad ornaments, the jewelry summons meditative fingering, as would a rosary or a string of Buddhist prayer beads. Holding and caressing this work feels as soothing as running fingers through warm sand.

But unlike religious beads, Lippe's talismans aim to foster personal interpretation and reflection. Mirroring nature's randomness, Lippe embellishes pieces with an eclectic array of found and fabricated miniature objects. Fingernail sized aqua and sky-blue beach glass, a flat polished bisque-hued stone, a red disk and ice-blue glass beads commune with skillfully soldered sterling pine cones, leaves, acorn tops, seed pods and flower petals, keepsakes symbolic of her environment. Deep-violet pearls perch on brass branches, huckleberries waiting to be plucked. Iridescent pink and gentian pearls shimmer like raindrops. Silky red ribbons spill from cage-like reliquaries, harbingers of new life. Wispy threads propagate like aerial roots. Whether Lippe's curios dangle helter-skelter along her chains or nest in cascading layers, harmony prevails.

Quirkier charms evolve from nature's shapes and patterns and their industrial replication. The repeating circular motif alludes to tree rings and wheels. Swirls mimic fiddlehead ferns and architecturally suggest the Guggenheim's spiral walkway. In the yard-length neckpiece *Jules Verne* interlocked metal rims bring to mind pasta rotelles, crop circles or animal foot traps. Fascinated by the infinite variation and layers in nature, Lippe incorporates flexibility, allowing the necklaces to hook or wrap in multiple ways. *Structures* skips the chain altogether: a garland is formed of linked gold leaves; a welded coil resembles a spider's web dappled with dew; and a fish vertebra is honed from metal strands and rings.

Lippe favors imperfection and age. A twig bearing fruit leaves one stamen empty. Another small branch holds a berry gone bad. Surfaces appear worn and irregular, a departure from her earlier precision and elegant polished silver surfaces. To achieve a shadowed matte patina Lippe mastered *niello*, an ancient technique of forming and fusing a black metallic alloy to a metal base. Leaving elements uncleaned and unoxidized, she files into the variegated overlay, bestowing a lush sense of antiquity. Each element appears as a memento just rescued from a forgotten drawer. Cunningly, these objects imply an imaginary past brimming with promise.

Unstructured and featherweight, Lippe's constructions meld to the body like moss on a rock. Rather than a minimalist rigidity, her organic motif reads more counter-culture than haute couture. Its earthy, ephemeral cachet evokes the cycles of life; the somnolence of autumn and vitality of spring. Its fluidity imparts holistic contentment.

Over 30 years of making one-of-a-kind and production jewelry, Lippe remains a people person. Sharing a studio with three women enables dialogue that influences and affirms her thoughts. A dedicated community networker, she's enhanced the careers of fellow artists by founding the Seattle Metals Guild, running the Seattle Women's Shelter Jewelry Project, teaching, and serving on local and national arts boards.

Lippe emphasizes she cannot copy Mother Nature; that she merely suggests, leaving the wearer to ruminate on meaning. Nevertheless, her awe of unrestrained wilderness emanates from the jewelry. Without lecturing or eliciting guilt, Lippe's subtle message celebrates the natural world, a reminder to cherish and protect it.

Judith Wagonfeld is a freelance writer living in Seattle

Random (earrings), 2011
sterling silver, 22k bimetal, 14k, hematite, silk
height 3"
Photo: Micki Lippe

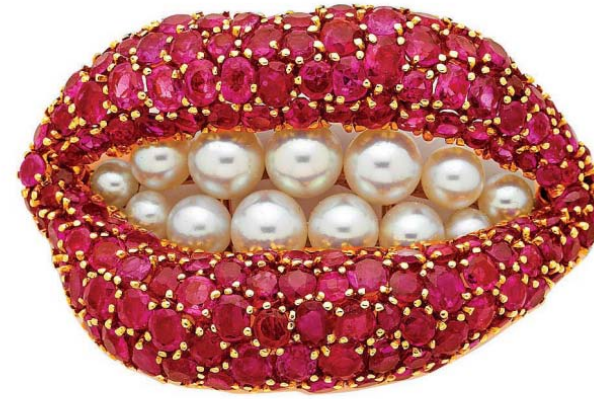
Hiking, 2011
Sterling silver, copper, 22k bimetal, silk, pearls, jasper, carnelian, crystal, smoky quartz, glass, onyx
length 18"
Photo: Micki Lippe

Picasso to Koons: The Artist as Jeweler

Museum of Arts and Design, New York
September 20, 2011-January 8, 2012

by Thomas Gentille

This exhibition—a first for the United States in this specific genre—features roughly 200 examples of jewelry by modern and contemporary painters and sculptors. It is largely drawn from the collection of Diane Venet, whose research and passion is to be applauded, as is her devotion to this category of jewelry. Through Venet's efforts, the public will be made to realize that the solo word *jewelry* does not designate a singular field but one that is multitudinous and complex just like, well, sculpture and painting. Some of the artists represented have made the work themselves; these pieces are in the minority, have the most energy, and are the more thrilling. Items by Alexander Calder and Louise Nevelson superbly fit that bill. Work fabricated by others from artists' designs varies in effectiveness. A platinum pin produced for Anish Kapoor, with file-finished exterior and mirror-polished interior, is very fine indeed,while his ring in yellow gold with blue enamel doesn't make the transition from his full-scale work. Salvador Dali's fabulous limited-edition pin of red ruby lips and gleaming white pearl teeth is skillfully made. The first time I saw one of these surreal pieces, being worn by dealer Audrey Friedman, from her own collection, I asked if I could kiss the lips. She graciously granted me the boon. The history of the piece sent unexpected shock waves down my spine.



SALVADOR DALI
Lips, 1949
gold, rubies, pearls
width 2 3/8"
PHOTO: MICAH SCHMIDT
COURTESY PRIMAVERA GALLERY, NEW YORK

ALEXANDER CALDER
Untitled (necklace), 1935
brass wire, cord
height 14 ½"
PHOTO: SHERRY GRIFFIN

Upon entering the exhibition, visitors encounter the "big guns" who designed jewelry in the traditional style, i.e. using gold and precious stones, but who did not themselves make the work. These include Picasso, Braque, Arp, Magritte, Max Ernst, Man Ray, and Jean Cocteau, among others. Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Jesus Rafael Soto, Meret Oppenheim, Leonor Fini, Dorothea Tanning, Louise Nevelson and Kiki Smith are also among the numerous luminaries scattered throughout the exhibition. As the more famous names tend to be placed toward the front of the gallery, the installation segues steadily and randomly toward lesser known, unfamiliar personages and ultimately, in the end, lesser works.

There appears to be some attempt at categorizing the pieces in aesthetic and material terms but this is unclear. However, the installation does provide, possibly unintentionally, a cross-generational example of how concept and craftsmanship can vary within any discipline. It is quite instructive to see. Three works, all hand-forged are shown side by side: the first an Alexander Calder (1939), primitive, elegant, powerful; the second, by Harry Bertioa (1940), a sensitively made, kinetic mechanism; the third, by Costa Coulentianos (1990), badly forged and soldered, disastrously gold plated.

*Picasso to Koon*s held three great surprises for me: a very fine pin by the sculptor John Chamberlain, made by himself; an amazing (I've seen them worn) pair of kinetic earrings by the sculptor George Rickey, made by the artist; and a small dynamic pin by the Futurist painter Giacomo Balla, produced in an edition of 350, by Artcurial. Anyone, man or woman, would be proud to wear it, not due to its workmanship, which is remiss, but to its astonishing dynamics.

The most important part of any exhibition, beyond the work, is the installation of same. The questions are: Has the work been respected, given proper space, exhibited in a manner that of itself is stimulating? MAD's jewelry gallery, with its inflexible fishbowl-like design, has yet to satisfactorily achieve these goals; their reputation is in jeopardy.

Thomas Gentille is an artist and sometimes author.

Soundforge: Gabriel Craig and Michael Remson

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft
October 11, 2011-January 8, 2012

by Tacey A. Rosolowski

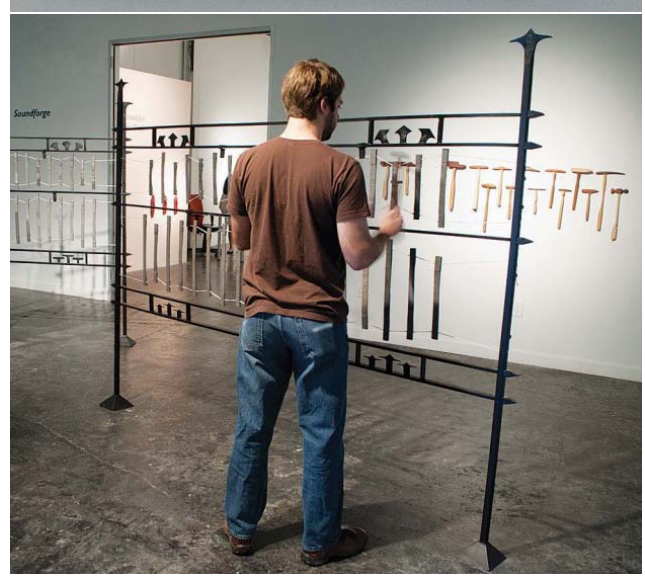
The most successful artistic experiments maneuver audiences into new experiences of art, and such is the case with the installation, *Soundforge,* a collaborative exploration of metalsmithing and music by metalsmith Gabriel Craig and composer Michael Remson. Craig is a self-described metalsmith, writer, and craft activist living in Michigan. Remson is a composer who serves as Executive and Artistic Director of the American Festival for the Arts, Houston, Texas. They met while Craig was artist-in-residence at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. Since 2007, Craig has been known for his public jewelry making demos, called *The Pro Bono Jeweler,* that invite non-artists to engage with craft process. He found a kindred spirit in Remson, who believes that music is interactive, not "something 'over there' that we applaud to." *Soundforge* imports a guerilla-style experience into an institutional setting, inviting usually passive visitors to take on the role of makers as they experience the musical dimensions of craft process and the craft behind music.

In the first section of the installation, a flat-screen video presentation conceals the main part of the exhibition from view, but nevertheless introduces the show's conceptual center. Video clips of ten metalsmiths are accompanied by Remson's sixteen-minute percussion composition. The forgers (among them Gabriel Craig, Ian Henderson, Andrew Kyte, Paul Neff and the sole woman, Sarah Holden) work glowing metal with power hammers and hand tools. Usually, depictions of metalwork are paired with dramatic strains that romanticize the craftsman as a worker god or blue-collar hero. But Remson observed Craig in his studio and created a percussive soundscape of almost delicate, meandering tones that guides focus to the smiths' gestures and especially to the vital moment when a forging instrument strikes metal, producing both sound and form.

Visitors occupy this sweet spot once they step behind the video booth. They first see three frames, each 6'6" high and fitted with rows of musical keys in standard structural steel. Craig learned ironworking to create these instruments, based on the form of a glockenspiel. But their musical properties were defined through collaboration with Remson, who mapped out the pentatonic minor scales (five notes per octave) that both the soundscape and the instruments follow. Craig forged the ninety-two keys and tuned each to the scales, lowering the tone by hollowing out the key, or raising the tone by removing material from the ends. He created the mallets that hang invitingly on the walls and, in fact, *Soundforge* has been successfully designed to ease visitors into the musical experience. Remson's composition employs ideas from both Indonesian gamelan music and Carnatic music of south India: the slow development keeps a theme playing long enough for visitors to imitate or harmonize with it. The too-common (and culturally instilled) fears of blundering slip away, since any combination of keys produces music. Visitors of all ages slip into the music, beginning tentatively at first, but eventually playing with gusto. To bring the activity back to metalwork, Craig formed the mallets as hammers (rather than more streamlined xylophone mallets), so the music-making gestures originate from the shoulder, as in forging.

Curator Anna Walker notes that the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft is committed to exposing audiences to craft's process-base; *Soundforge* is their first exhibition to engage the audience so directly. The enthusiastic responses of audience members and staff (some of whom will miss hearing "the Soundforge song" from down the hall) demonstrate how thoroughly we are wired to experience the world in multi-sensory ways. We can learn much by overturning museum conventions and theories about craft (and art) that cut us off from our human nature. English has no word for one who simultaneously sees, hears, and acts upon something. An exhibition such as *Soundforge* brings us back to the process- and action-base of craft. But we may need to craft a new term to express how we interact with such work—perhaps as *viewacteners*?

(top) *Soundforge* (installation detail), 2011 video monitor



Soundforge (installation detail), 2011 mild steel, woden mallets

Tacey A. Rosolowski is a freelance writer and independent scholar living in Houston, Texas.

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BY DANA SINGER

Biba Schutz, new member of Metalsmith's *Editorial Advisory Committee*

(top) Todd Pownell, a presenter at SNAG's forthcoming Business Symposium
(bottom) Artists and shoppers at SNAG's first annual Trunk Show sale in Seattle, 2011

Biba Schutz Joins *Metalsmith*'s Editorial Advisory Committee

Biba Schutz is a self-taught jeweler with a diverse background in design, printmaking and fiber. She creates sculptural pieces using fabricated wire of copper, silver and bronze. Schutz's work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions throughout the U.S. and has been highlighted in many publications including *Metalsmith*; *American Craft*; *Ornament*; and the "500" book series published by Lark Books. Schutz replaces outgoing committee member Kiff Slemmons.

SNAG Business Symposium this August in Pittsburgh

SNAG presents "Forging Entrepreneurs: Tools and Skills for Business Success," an all-day symposium, Sunday, August 26, Pittsburgh, PA, in collaboration with the Society for Contemporary Craft. An opening reception will be held at the Society the night before. This Symposium, limited to 100 attendees, will address the needs of studio jewelers, designers and metalsmiths through dual theme tracks: Skills and Success. Offerings in the Skills track are technical skills that will increase productivity and improve the bottom line. The Success track will explore timely business topics for entrepreneurs. The Success track presenters are Michelle Pajak-Reynolds, Brigitte Martin, Wayne Werner, and Adam Kenney. The Skills track features Andrea Kennington and Les Bryant of NC Black, Todd Pownell, Beverly Tadeu, and Ronald McNeish.

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SNAG held its second annual Trunk Show Sale in Scottsdale, AZ, during our conference "The Heat is On," at the Westin Kierland Resort & Spa. For two hours on May 26, customers filled the room to browse and buy work from some 60 SNAG exhibitors.

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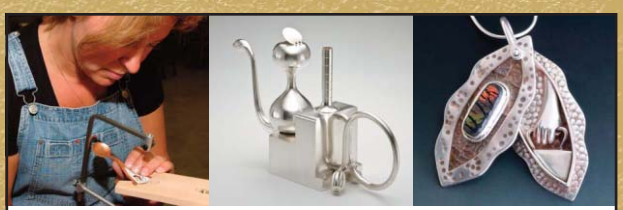

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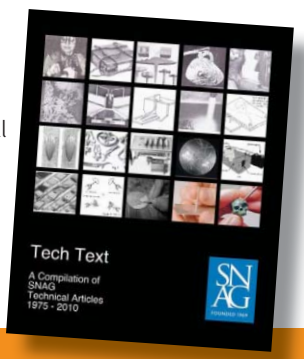

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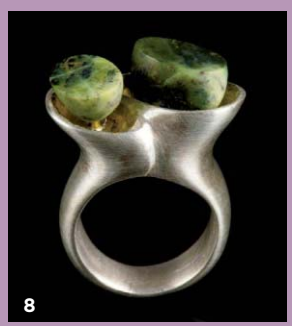
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JJ Buckar

1st Place - Future of the Industry (Student) (8)
Ariel Alexandrou
University of Kansas

Winners were announced at the 2012 MJSA Expo New York. Additional winners are Gregoré Morin, 2nd Place Professional; Liaung Chung Yen, 2nd Place Gold Distinction; Cynthia Renee, 2nd Place Custom Design; Mark Schneider, 2nd Place Platinum Distinction; Susan Drake, 2nd Place Palladium Distinction; Julie Buckareff, 2nd Place Laser Distinction and Visionary Technical Solution. For more information on all winners, please go to *mjsa.org.*

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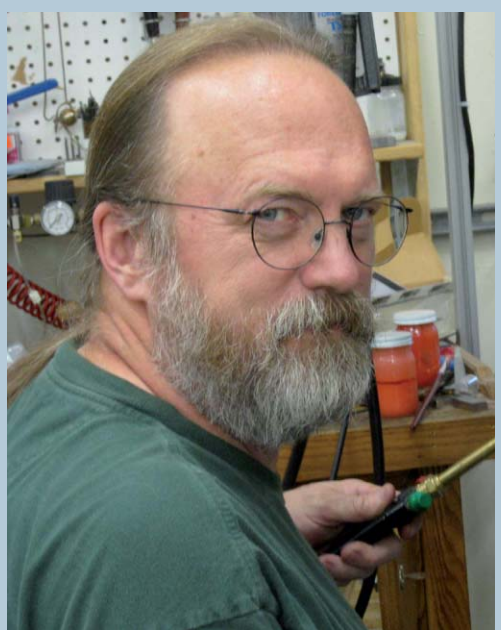

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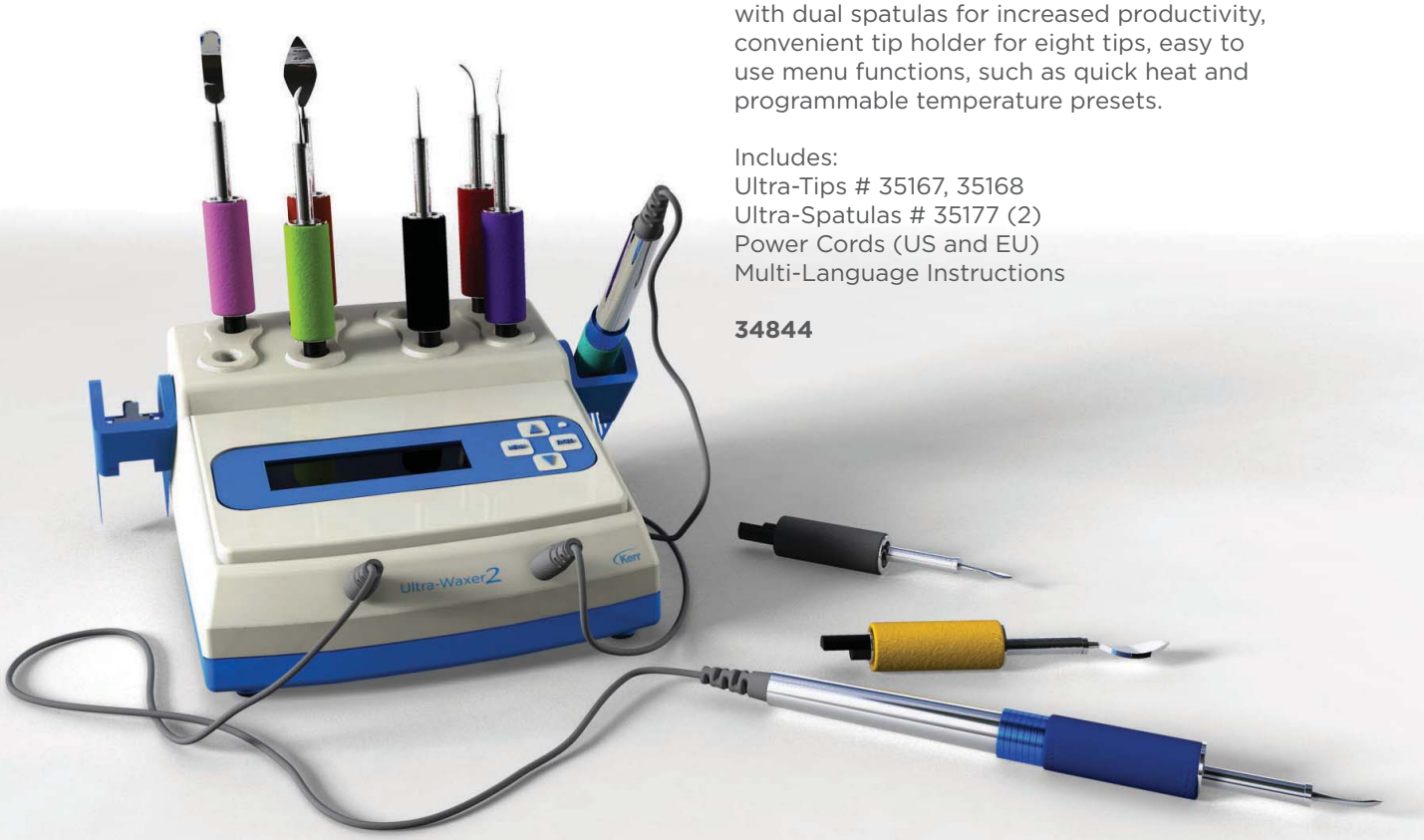

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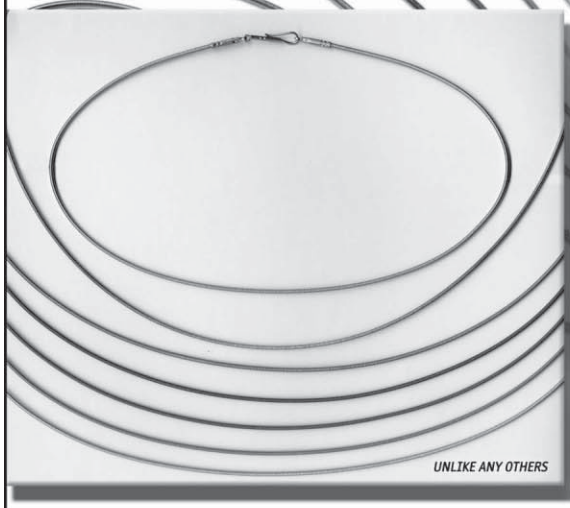

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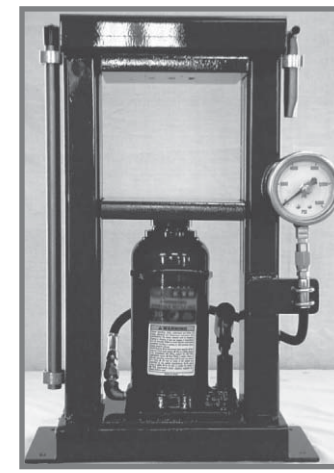

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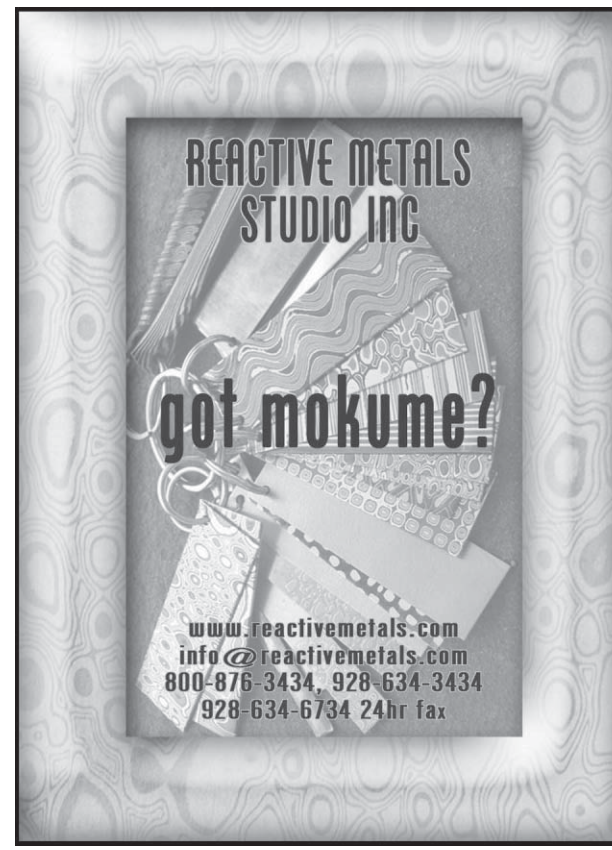

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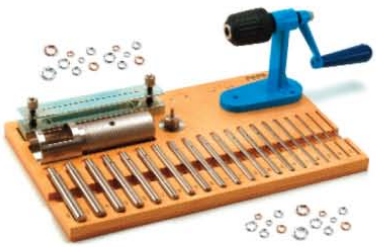

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